FRANZ : ADAM : BEYERLEIN

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class of 1920

TAPS

BY

FRANZ ADAM BEYERLEIN

Translated from the German
by Charles Swickard

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By L. E. Bassett

THE PUBLISHERS' NOTE

"Zapfenstreich," the anti-military play of Franz Adam Beyerlein is published in the following pages under the equivalent English title of "Taps."

While recognized as a powerful arraignment of the continental military caste in general, and the impassable social barrier existing between commissioned and non-commissioned officers in particular, the play itself as a dramatic composition has won universal appreciation and in the character of the old Sergeant Major has contributed to dramatic literature a portrait so genuine and vivid as to be unforgetable.

As a contemporary of Lieutenant Bilse's "Life in a Small Garrison" and Otto Erich Hartlebens' well-known "Rosenmontag," "Taps" was produced in Austria and Germany in 1901. The author although an Austrian and a radical as well as an anti-militarist,

with due regard for his personal convenience if not safety, laid his scene in German territory and selected for his study a squadron of the 25th Uhlans stationed in Alsace, not far from the border and the great French fortress of Belfourt.

The production of the play created an instantaneous uproar among militarists and officials and was speedily followed by an order emanating from the German Kaiser forbidding officers and soldiers from attending its performance in uniform.

Nevertheless the public at large flocked to the play and a little later it was produced in Paris where it ran one hundred performances and in London one hundred and ten nights. In New York at the Irving Place Theatre, under the original title and, of course, played in German, it continued a prosperous engagement of eight weeks.

Somewhat later under the direction of Mr. Charles Swickard, the translator of this and others of the more important

German dramas, the English version was produced in New York, but ran with only indifferent success for four weeks.

At that time neither German social conditions, nor the broader aspects of militarism were of particular interest to the public, and a play, recognized by all critics as of the first class, was neglected on the ground of being a bit of special pleading relating to a subject of no appreciable interest except to continental Europe.

Recent events have changed such an attitude of indifference to one of keen interest, and in this play, a merciless arraignment of the conditions, anomalies and abuses of caste prevalent in the German army, is to be found, aside from an intensely dramatic recital, the picture of a phase inherent in the army life of whatsoever country maintains a military establishment.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

VON BANNEWITZ.....Captain
VON HOEVEN.....Lieutenant
VON LAUFFEN.....Lieutenant
VOLKHARDT.....Sergeant Major
QUEISS.....Sergeant
HELBIG.....Sergeant
MICHALEK.....Private
SPIESS.....Private

Of the Third Squadron, of the Twenty-Fifth Uhlan Regiment (known as The Magdeburgers.)

CLARA VOLKHARDT.

MAJOR PASCHKE, of the Alsatian Heavy Artillery No. 19.

CAPTAIN COUNT VON LEHDENBURG, of the Cuirassier Regiment No. 10.

PREMIER LIEUTENANT HAGEMEISTER, of the Infantry Regiment No. 186.

First Councillor of the Court Martial (president).

Second Councillor of the Court Martial (associate).

Third Councillor of the Court Martial (prosecutor).

Recording Sergeant.

Assistant Regimental Surgeon.

Orderly of the Court Martial, a number of Uhlans.

Time: About 1900.

Place: Sennheim, a small garrison town near the French border in Alsace-Lorraine, in the direction of Belfort.

TAPS

ACT I

Scene: Office of the Sergeant Major. Gray-tinted, whitewashed walls and sparsely furnished. On the left, a window with striped roller shade. In the center an ordinary door painted brown. In front of the window, a fair-sized table with writing material, etc., and a chair. Similar table and chair on the opposite side of the room. To the left of the door, a hat rack fastened on wall. Next to that is a small cabinet for books and papers and in the corner, an iron-bound chest. On the other side of the door, a small table with a stool shoved under same. In the corner, an iron washstand with a towel above it. On the inside of the door hangs the daily inventory list. Hanging on the rack are: the helmet, the bandolier, belt and saber of the Sergeant Major. His cap on the table.

It is near noon and bright sunshine without.

At curtain:

CAPTAIN VON BANNEWITZ [*leaning against the table and glancing over an official list. He is in fatigue uniform, with the lapels of his coat buttoned back, bandolier, field tie, but with cap. The uniform is not too new, fairly covered with dust, for he has just come off duty. He carries a crop and is smoking a cigarette. Almost to himself*]: — Hm — yes! I presume we can let it go at that. Only — ! [*lowers list*] Sergeant Major!

VOLKHARDT [*has been writing diligently at opposite table: rises with military snap and comes to attention*]: At your service, Captain!

VON BANNEWITZ [*resignedly*]: Sergeant Major, if you knew how nervous you made me with your frightful exactness to the prescribed forms — Lord knows, Volkhardt, you'd stop it.

VOLKHARDT: At your service, Captain.

VON BANNEWITZ: Yes, yes! "At my service" — but you do as you like. [*Threatens him jestingly with crop.*] If you're not careful, I'll soil your lily-white record with a three-day arrest for continued disobedience of your Captain's orders.— But what I meant to say! — In distributing the

remounts for the fall manœuvers you assigned Caroline to Lieut. von Lauffen.

VOLKHARDT: Your pardon, Captain! As the Lieutenant is to command the third squad, I thought it best. You know Diana is a pretty high-spirited animal, and —

VON BANNEWITZ: And therefore just the mount for von Lauffen. He can surely manage her, can't he?

VOLKHARDT [*beaming*]: He certainly can, sir, if anyone!

VON BANNEWITZ: Well? And?

VOLKHARDT: With your permission, Captain! I wouldn't take a chance in the front rank with that nag, if only on account of the impression a bad break would make on the men. I tell you, sir, just about now that mare is liable to do most anything, when you least expect it.

VON BANNEWITZ: Volkhardt, you are fibbing. I appreciate your desire to shield your lieutenant. At Vionville in 1870 his father, the old excellency, cut you out of a body of French cuirassiers and now the son is not going to break his neck if you can prevent it! A splendid spirit, Volkhardt, but I think your fears are groundless.

VOLKHARDT: At your service, Captain.

VON BANNEWITZ: And you may assign Diana to the Lieutenant tomorrow.

VOLKHARDT: At your service, Captain.

VON BANNEWITZ: And one thing more. [*Points to list.*] You have assigned Derflinger to yourself. My dear Volkhardt! I wouldn't ride that atrocious beast myself. Think of yourself a little, Volkhardt. You are fifty now, thirty-three years of which you've spent in the service. You are entitled to *some* consideration.

VOLKHARDT: Your pardon, Captain. If you mean that I am getting too old for the service, I would rather you'd tell me so outright. It'll be pretty hard to leave the old regiment.

VON BANNEWITZ [*thoughtfully striking his boot with crop, then looking up sharply*]: Volkhardt! I believe this is the first time, since I have taken command of this troop, that you have given me cause to censure you. You surely know how you are appreciated by your superiors, from the Commandant down to the youngest lieutenant!

VOLKHARDT: At your service, Captain!

VON BANNEWITZ: Then let's say no more about it. And to me you should have said this least of all. In ten years one learns to value not only the Sergeant Major, but to appreciate and honor the man. If the Lord wills, I shall soon obtain

my majority, and who knows where I'll be sent. Now whether you believe me or not, I shall *never forget you*, my dear Volkhardt. You shall always live in my memory as the model of a trustworthy, Prussian non-commissioned officer. [*Shakes his hand.*]

VOLKHARDT [*touched — his voice betraying his emotion*]: My most respectful thanks, Captain — and — I ask your pardon! I suppose I shouldn't have said it — and yet, some of these days I'll have to quit the service. I can't help it, but I dread to think of that time.

VON BANNEWITZ: Yes, yes, Volkhardt, I understand you perfectly. I dare say if your boy were living today you wouldn't find it quite so hard. No doubt he would have made as splendid a non-commissioned officer as his father. It's a pity he died so young.

VOLKHARDT [*gruffly*]: No, Captain!

VON BANNEWITZ: No? Oh, well! Perhaps not! But that doesn't sound very nice coming from you.

VOLKHARDT: Your pardon, Captain, but I believe it was a good thing the misfortune came at the time it did. Now I can remember the boy at least as a half decent sort. Had he lived — ! I'm afraid he

would have come to a bad end. That he drank and was a devil after the women — well, he might have gotten over that in time, but his mania for gambling and — well, Captain, with your permission, he is better off where he is.

VON BANNEWITZ: At any rate it would have made it easier for you when the time comes to lay aside your beloved uniform. [*Puts on his gloves and starts to leave.*] Now you will have to content yourself with Miss Clara alone.

VOLKHARDT [*beaming*]: At your service, Captain! That girl should have been a boy. There's no nonsense there. You can depend on her!

VON BANNEWITZ [*more animated than usual*]: Sergeant Major, your daughter is a jewel. Lucky man indeed who gets her for a wife.

VOLKHARDT: At your service, Captain — and while we're on the subject, could Sergeant Helbig obtain the marriage consent? That is, of course, if it came to that.

VON BANNEWITZ [*hesitating*]: Helbig? Let me see! I don't think there's anything in his record to prevent! So he is the lucky man? Why, of course! You brought him up yourself! The young people have known each other for a long time. He returned

today from the military riding academy at Hanover, where he left an enviable reputation behind him. He's a little awkward, perhaps, but thorough — very thorough! And do you think he will be the right sort of a companion for your daughter?

VOLKHARDT: I think so, Captain!

VON BANNEWITZ: Well, I think the young lady should be the best judge of that! Only one thing you must promise me, Volkhardt. Don't try to influence the girl. She should have her own way in such things.

VOLKHARDT [*smiling*]: Your pardon, Captain, but that's just the trouble with her. She's a good and obedient girl, but I've never been able to instill her with the proper military subordination.

VON BANNEWITZ: Thank goodness! For after all, Sergeant, the military regulations were not intended for the whole world.

CLARA [*enters quickly, then a trifle embarrassed*]: Excuse me intruding, Captain! I wanted to ask father something.

VON BANNEWITZ [*with finished gallantry, but more that of the father, or the uncle toward his niece*]: Intrusion? Nonsense! I was just about to go — and — may I offer you this modest flower? [*Takes a wild*

rose from his buttonhole and gives it to her.] It came from French soil, and, who knows, may even become the innocent cause of another sanguinary conflict.

CLARA: Oh, Captain, let's hope not! [*Fastens the rose on her bosom.*] You must have taken quite a ride this morning.

VON BANNEWITZ: As far as the border. Our friends the Dragoons de Giromagny were up and astir as early as ourselves. I picked the rose from the foreign bush and called to the French Captain: *Pour mon amour!* Saluting, he answered: *Bien des choses de ma part!* You see, Miss Clara, even the French Captain lays his heart at your feet.

CLARA: Now, Captain, you can't make me believe that. But isn't the rose beautiful! I thank you, Captain!

VON BANNEWITZ: But I must be going. Good morning, Miss Clara [*slight bow*]. Morning, Sergeant!

CLARA AND VOLKHARDT: Good morning, Captain!

VON BANNEWITZ: Morning! [*Exit.*]

VOLKHARDT [*scolding good-naturedly*]: Donnerwetter, Clara! How often must I tell you not to burst in here in that manner? Now be quick. Say what you've got to say and then — [*whistles and points to door*].

CLARA: In a minute! Well, dad, an orderly from the non-com's mess wants to know, if the keg, that you — *you, dad* — have ordered for tonight, is to be Colmar lager or real Munchener!

VOLKHARDT [*has straightened up. After a slight pause*]: Munchener! [*Continues to write.*]

CLARA: Donnerwetter! [*Smacks her lips.*] I tell you, the Magdeburger Uhlans! Eh, dad? — What's going on, dad?

VOLKHARDT: Curiosity! [*Points to the door.*]

CLARA: Dad!

VOLKHARDT: Will you quit bothering me? I have work to do here.

CLARA: A secret, eh? If you'll let me in on it you may write all evening. [*Drops on a chair.*] Well, daddy?

VOLKHARDT: Well — a new arrival!

CLARA: In whose honor you are treating a whole keg of Munchener. I can't imagine who that can be.

VOLKHARDT: Or rather, some one has returned.

CLARA [*thinks a moment, then shakes her head*].

VOLKHARDT: From Hanover — from the military riding academy.

CLARA [*thoughtful for a moment — then suddenly pales. All jollity has left her*]: Otto?

VOLKHARDT: Well? — Clara! What's the matter with you? Aren't you glad?

CLARA: Why, daddy — of course. Only — I never thought of that! Never!

VOLKHARDT [*scratching his head*]: Clara! Come here to me. [*Pulls her on his knee.*] There, dear. And now look me in the eye. [*With suppressed anger as Clara lowers her glances.*] Damme, girl, you surely can look your old father in the eye! Do you hear me? Clara? Or have you got something on your conscience? [*Reluctantly she forces herself to look into his eyes.*] There! I knew it. What could you have to hide from your old daddy? But I want to know what's the matter with you lately. Something's wrong. One minute you sing and are as happy as a lark, and without any apparent reason — and then the next you hang your head like a distempered horse — also without any reason. I tell you frankly I don't like that. Here I imagine it's going to be a happy surprise when I tell you of Otto's return — ! Instead of that you —

CLARA [*has risen — a trifle stubbornly*]: I don't know what you want, father. Of course I'm glad Otto has returned, but you can't expect me to — well — [*shrugs her shoulders*].

VOLKHARDT: But I thought you two understood each other perfectly?

CLARA: Who said so?

VOLKHARDT: Zum donnerwetter! The devil knows how to take you women. I've got a pair of eyes in my head, haven't I? Now don't stand there like a balky horse! Haven't you got a tongue in your head?

VON LAUFFEN [*enters briskly*]: Sergeant Major Volkhardt! The Captain wants to see you about the last forage bills. The last delivery seems to be short five bales of hay.

VOLKHARDT [*busily*]: At your service, Lieutenant. [*Looks on table.*] Let's see. Yes, here they are [*as he finds them*].

VON LAUFFEN: Good morning, Miss Clara!

CLARA: Good morning, Lieutenant.

VON LAUFFEN [*to Volkhardt, who is at the door by this time*]: You will find the Captain in the remount stables.

VOLKHARDT: At your service, Lieutenant! [*Exit.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*kissing Clara*]: Morning, mouse!

CLARA: Good morning, dear.

VON LAUFFEN: Just out of bed, I suppose.

CLARA: Not a bit of it. I was up as early as you.

VON LAUFFEN: Really? You? Nonsense. You were fast asleep.

CLARA: Could any one sleep when a whole

regiment of heavy cavalry on field duty passes your window?

VON LAUFFEN: At three-thirty A.M. It's an outrage. It's surely no fun, serving in a frontier corps. No indeed. 'Pon my word.

CLARA: And I saw you yawning, too.

VON LAUFFEN: That was almost human under the circumstances, wasn't it?

CLARA: And then you boxed Michalek's ear. That's cruelty to soldiers.

VON LAUFFEN: I plead guilty again. Think of it! Because I had run out of cognac he filled my canteen with bay rum.

CLARA: The stupid.

VON LAUFFEN: And you — [*softly — drawing her to him*] you crawled back into your soft, white, little bed? [*Startled, pushes her away, as he hears some one approaching. Heavy, martial footsteps, clanking spurs*].

QUEISS [*enters, comes to attention bruskly. Notices Clara with slight astonishment*].

VON LAUFFEN [*sharply*]: What is it, Queiss?

QUEISS: Your pardon, Lieutenant. The Captain wishes to see the Sergeant Major in regard to the last forage delivery.

VON LAUFFEN: I've already told the Sergeant Major. He should be there by this time.

QUEISS: At your service, Lieutenant. [*Clicks his heels together; with a sharp turn exits.*]

VON LAUFFEN: Disagreeable fellow, this Queiss.

CLARA: I don't know. He has never done me any harm, but somehow I'm afraid of him.

VON LAUFFEN: Of him? Nonsense! [*As she looks at him surprised — kindly*]: Don't be foolish, sweetheart. Why should you? He's a detestable sneak, that's all. A sort of a conspirator. One of these socialistic agitators disguised in the honorable uniform of the Uhlans. Nothing frank or open about him. He reminds me of —! At any rate, I can't bear the fellow.

CLARA [*timidly*]: I wonder if he saw anything — at that time?

VON LAUFFEN [*a trifle disturbed*]: When?

CLARA: You remember! The time I left you. He was just returning from stable revision and it was already dawning.

VON LAUFFEN: Nonsense, girl. It was your imagination. He didn't see anything. You see specters, my dear; specters, upon my word.

CLARA: I only hope you're right. Yet I can't help feeling as I do. But I must get back now. Good morning, Kurt. [*Would go to door.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*holds and kisses her*]: Wait a moment. A kiss in the company quarters! That's surely something new.

CLARA: Dearest. [*Returns the kiss.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*softly*]: Tell me, sweetheart, when are you coming to see me again? Tonight? After Taps has sounded? Come, promise me!

CLARA: But, Kurt dear —

VON LAUFFEN: Come now, give me your promise. That's a good girl!

CLARA: But it can't be done.

VON LAUFFEN: Why not?

CLARA [*deliberating*]: The non-commissioned officers have a little affair at their mess tonight. Father'll be there — [*after a moment's hesitation throws herself on his breast*].

VON LAUFFEN: Then you'll come? [*She nods as she releases herself.*] And the signal as usual — the green shade over my lamp?

CLARA [*nods and would go to the door. Lauffen is still holding her hand*].

HELBIG [*enters. In full dress uniform. He is surprised to find Clara here. As he sees Lauffen he comes to attention and announces*]: Respectfully report the return of Sergeant Helbig from the military riding academy of Hanover.

VON LAUFFEN [*superior, though slightly embarrassed*]: 'Tis well, Helbig. Hm — ! Yes! — Well, and how did you like Hanover? Jolly old burg, isn't it?

HELBIG: At your service, Lieutenant! It's a fine city — [*his eyes are seeking Clara*], but I think it's much nicer here at home with our own regiment.

VON LAUFFEN: What? Here in Sennheim? But, every man to his taste [*dismissing him*]: 'Tis well, Helbig. Oh — ! Perhaps you wanted to wait for the Sergeant Major here?

HELBIG: At your service, Lieutenant.

VON LAUFFEN: Then I presume, Miss Clara, we may as well go. [*Turns to her as if to let her go out first.*]

CLARA [*after slight hesitation*]: No thank you, Lieutenant. I haven't seen my foster brother for two years, and —

VON LAUFFEN: Your foster brother?

CLARA: Yes! Sergeant Helbig [*reluctantly giving Helbig her hand*]. How do you do, Otto!

VON LAUFFEN [*biting his lip*]: Of course! I had forgotten entirely. Volkhardt was your guardian?

HELBIG: At your service, Lieutenant. I have been with him since my twelfth year.

VON LAUFFEN: Yes, yes. I remember now. Then I will no longer disturb you. Morning! [*Exits with a slight bow to Clara.*]

HELBIG [*has come to attention and opened the door — closes it after Lieutenant. Now hap-*

pily seeks Clara's hand]: Donnerwetter, Clara! This is a surprise! Eh, what? You hadn't the slightest idea I was coming. I made father promise not to say a word. It was to be a surprise — like a flank attack on the enemy. And didn't I succeed? Eh, what?

CLARA [*with a weak attempt to assume his tone*]: Yes indeed, Otto. However, father *did* tell me you were coming — just a few moments ago —

HELBIG [*blundering*]: So he couldn't keep his mouth shut after all.

CLARA [*trying to get away*]: But have you seen him yet? I will call him.

HELBIG: Never mind, Clara; stay here! He's with the Captain in the remount stables. I nodded to him as I came by. He'll soon be here.

CLARA: But I must go anyway! A canteen orderly has been waiting for half an hour for an answer from me —

HELBIG: Oh, let him wait!

CLARA: No, no! [*Would go.*]

HELBIG [*reaches the door first and stops her with outstretched arms*]: Halt! Attention! No one can pass this way!

CLARA [*annoyed*]: Otto, stop your nonsense!

HELBIG: Nonsense? That's the custom of war. Clara — [*approaches her — sincerely*].

Won't you give me a real welcome home now? I've been away for two long years —

CLARA: Well — I've already shaken hands with you, haven't I?

HELBIG: Oh yes! — I see! I'll have to take my kiss by force! [*Clumsily tries to embrace and kiss her.*]

CLARA [*preventing him — fiercely*]: Don't do that! I won't have it!

HELBIG [*steps back, startled*]: Well then, don't! I can't say you are very nice to me after my long absence!

CLARA [*shrugs her shoulders and goes to the door*].

HELBIG [*pleading*]: What have you got against me, all of a sudden? We always got along well together! Why are you now so — so ugly towards me?

CLARA: Good heavens, Otto, I don't mean to be ugly towards you — certainly not! But you must come to realize that the foolishness of the old days can't go on forever.

HELBIG: Foolishness? So that's what you call it now? [*Plaintively*] Clara! All the two long years I've been away in Hanover I never once ceased to think of this, what you call "foolishness." And I can tell you the service and the duties there are not the easiest in the world. For the first

few weeks I didn't know whether every bone in my body was really broken, or whether it was just imagination. And the officers and instructors —? A fellow has to hold his temper till all is learned. That's the time he thinks of his home! And then, when things became easier and my time neared the end, I thought of home and you — more than ever! How nice and kind you had always been to me, and — and what you just now call foolishness —

CLARA: Why Otto, dear, I really *am* glad that you are home again —

HELBIG: Now you are lying, Clara; I can see it in your face. You needn't try to pretend: I can catch the drift of your argument all right. [*Softer*] Tell me, at least, why you don't want me any more!

CLARA: Why Otto, I don't know what you mean.

HELBIG [*roughly*]: Oh, hell! Don't try to fool me. [*Persuasive again*] See here, Clara! All the way, on my long trip home, from early yesterday morning throughout the whole night I thought of nothing but you, and how delighted you'd be at my sudden appearance. If she wept like a child when I left, said I to myself, she'll just throw her arms around me and—

and this is what I get. And Clara, you must have a reason for it all. You used to think nothing of giving me a kiss —

CLARA: That's when we were supposed to be sweethearts.

HELBIG [*flaring up*]: So that's at an end too, is it? Now I know at least where I stand.

CLARA: If you'd only be reasonable —

HELBIG: Oh, damn it, shut your m — ! Don't try to hoodwink me.

CLARA [*startled at the curse — now with dignity*]: Do you think swearing at me is going to help matters?

HELBIG: I see! You've gotten to be a fine lady now, and it offends your aristocratic ears. Damn it! Then of course I'm no longer a fit companion for the likes of you. Yes — when a Captain is dancing attendance to her and presents her with flowers — [*as she looks up at him, surprised*] — Oh, I'm not as big a fool as I look. When I reported to the Captain a while ago he had that rose in his buttonhole. To be sure, what's a common Sergeant compared to a noble Captain? The old baldhead, with about as much hair on his head as a mangy horse.

CLARA: Well — don't ever let father hear you rave like that, if you know what's good for yourself. Your stay at Hanover

seems to have turned you into half an anarchist.

HELBIG: Anarchist nothing. Though I've learned to realize that an officer is just a common mortal like ourselves, and not a demigod.

CLARA: Well, who said he was? At any rate it's immaterial to me what you think about it. [*Imploring*] Only one thing I will ask of you, Otto. Let's not make father's lot heavier than it is already. He will have to quit the service soon, and you know how heavily that weighs on his heart. So we shouldn't worry him with our little troubles just now. You say you love me, Otto! I — I — am awfully sorry I can't return it! [*As she sees he is hurt*] That is, I love you very much — only not the same as you love me — not the same way, I mean — and — and if you truly love me, Otto, don't tell father about this, will you?

HELBIG: If you talk to me like that, then — I can't — then you can do anything — ask anything you like. And father? Of course I'll not worry him with it! What good would that do me, since you don't care for me any longer? And what I said about the Captain a moment ago — I know it, it was contemptible. Yes, it was. It was only my rotten temper, that's

all! Don't I know you've been his pet since you were a little girl? [*With slight bitterness*] That, at least, seems to have remained as of old.

CLARA: Now you're talking sensibly! And just to satisfy you, daddy stood here, and the Captain there when he gave me this flower.

HELBIG: There, I knew it — and I was only talking like a jealous fool. [*Up and down.*] And it won't happen again, Clara. But do you know if I were to be jealous again it would be of Lieutenant von Lauffen, rather than the Captain.

CLARA: I'd like to know —

HELBIG: Why — when I came in he didn't seem to want to let go of your hand. I saw it plain enough.

CLARA: He only meant it in fun.

HELBIG: Of course he did. But hasn't he improved? Four years ago, when I gave him his first instructions as a cadet, the young cub seemed to sort of rebel against taking his medicine. I woke the young milksop up all right. And what a fine-looking young fellow he has grown to be! Eh, what?

CLARA [*nervously*]: Lord knows, Otto, this military riding academy must be a dreadful place. You've learned expressions there

— why I never heard you speak so disrespectfully of your superior officers before.

HELBIG: Now, Clara, don't exaggerate. I respect von Lauffen as much as any one, and carry out my orders because it's got to be done. But what you would call the real, genuine respect, inwardly, I mean — Well, why should I? I obey because it's my duty, but aside from being my superior, he's a human being, with a fresh, youthful face, a sprouting mustache — er — what you would call a handsome young fellow.

CLARA: Just what I said before. You've become a genuine, redheaded anarchist.

HELBIG: Nonsense! I've taken the oath to the colors, and that settles it, as far as I am concerned.

CLARA: But that you have selected Lieutenant von Lauffen for your special criticism is, to say the least, detestable.

HELBIG: How so? What do you mean?

CLARA: I should think you ought to know what I mean!

HELBIG: You mean *his* father saved *your* father's life in 1870! That's very good. That was the old man. I don't see why the boy —

CLARA [*struggling with indignation*]: Then ask in the troop, or in the whole regiment, what they think of him. The Colonel,

the Captain, my father — and I myself. We all think some day he'll be worthy of his noble father.

HELBIG: Say — you are certainly a fine champion of the young Lieutenant.

CLARA: Not at all! But I won't have him belittled or slandered by any one.

HELBIG [*something seems to dawn on him*]: Clara — you —

CLARA [*quickly to the door*]: I've got to go now —

HELBIG: Then it's Lauffen —?

CLARA [*fiercely — stamping her foot*]: Don't you mention that name again. Understand? [*Exits.*]

HELBIG [*taking a step or two as if to follow her. Then rams his saber to the floor*]: You just wait! [*Goes to stool, sits down and buries his face in his hands.*]

QUEISS [*enters bruskly. He is about to come to attention, when he recognizes Helbig. Then he leisurely comes forward*].

HELBIG [*has looked around, slowly rises and meets Queiss half way*].

QUEISS: Once more, my boy, welcome home.

HELBIG [*shakes his hand*]: Thank you, Queiss!

QUEISS: What's the matter with you?

HELBIG: Oh — nothing.

QUEISS [*shrugs his shoulders — walks away, whistling the signal "quickstep march."*

After a pause]: Waiting for the Sergeant Major?

HELBIG: Yes! And you?

QUEISS: Yep! [*Pause — now whistles signal "gallop march."*] Well, boy, how did you like Hanover?

HELBIG: Oh, pretty fair.

QUEISS: Is that all you've got to say to me? That ain't much! Have you had a kick in the mouth, that you've lost your speech?

HELBIG: Nonsense!

QUEISS: Nonsense, hell! You weren't always so close-mouthed. [*Whistles signal "double quickstep march."*] We had assignment of horses yesterday. For the manœuvers I gave you Dolores.

HELBIG [*listlessly*]: Yes? What sort of a nag is she?

QUEISS [*whistles through his teeth*]: Whew! A beast! But I broke her temper, believe me. You've learned to ride yourself now. They know their business at the riding academy, don't they?

HELBIG [*nods*].

QUEISS: Damned if they don't. I guess you'll be able to handle the old skate, all right. [*Like a rider driving his horse.*] Hoop la! Go! Keep your seat! Sit up straight! Eh, boy?

HELBIG [*a trifle boastfully*]: Don't you worry

about me. At the academy we had a halfbreed Arabian mare called Penthesilea or Parsley, or something like that, who threw them all. To come within ten feet of her meant broken bones.

QUEISS: Damn it, that's the stuff for my money. You find that spirit only with horses. And you rode her?

HELBIG: I was to ride her —

QUEISS: Oh, hell!

HELBIG: Well, I would have ridden her if —

QUEISS: If what?

HELBIG: If she hadn't broken her neck. Yes, and her rider's as well. It was Captain Weinsperg.

QUEISS: Weinsperg? Of the Baden Dragoons? You don't say? A damned fine fellow. He was already instructor at my time. But I always said he would come to that end.

HELBIG: Why so?

QUEISS: Hm! He spent all his spare time with women! Creatures! And that weakens, my boy! Here — and here — and here — [*points in succession to his wrists, his thighs and the small of his back*]. That couldn't happen to me. [*Close to him*]: My boy! There's yet time. Let her alone.

HELBIG: What do you mean?

QUEISS: Hell, man! Don't try to fool me.

Didn't I see that female glide out of that door a moment ago, and now you are hobbling around here like a spavined mule. [*Fiercely*] I tell you, let her alone!

HELBIG: Queiss! You know something!

QUEISS: You bet I do, and when I hear the swishing of skirts I look the other way. Over here [*looks aside*] — up there — [*looks to ceiling*].

HELBIG: Clara has been living here under your very nose. You must know what she's been up to these two years.

QUEISS: I ain't been running after her. Don't know what she's been up to.

HELBIG: You all live here close together. When one steps out of his door, you might say, he is treading on someone else's heels. And there are other women here too and scandal mongers —

QUEISS: I look the other way. Over here — up there!

HELBIG: And the boys are fond of silly rumors. You must have heard them talk. You're not deaf.

QUEISS: When they commence their dirty yarns about women I'm deaf, dumb and blind.

HELBIG [*sharply*]: Then why do you say, "Let her alone"? You must have some reason to tell me to let Clara alone.

QUEISS: Clara? [*Harsh laugh*] Ha-ha-ha-ha! I don't mean any particular *one!* Clara, Gretchen, Lisbeth — they all look alike to me. Let her alone, I say!

HELBIG: You're crazy, Queiss. You are yourself a mother's son.

QUEISS: That's all right, but whether I'm my father's son or not, that's a horse of another color. See here, Helbig. I was a young fellow like you once upon a time. No! I had more spunk and push about me. That was when I was with the second Uhlans. Well — I got married! [*Sneeringly*] Ha-ha-ha-ha! Such happiness! And then — one fine day, all of a sudden, she was gone! — [*whistles*] Girl, money, everything gone. A fellow who was more able to buy her silk skirts and hats and ribbons and the rest of the devil's finery had taken her away with him. Don't know who it was! Didn't try to find out, either. But inside of me here something began to boil and broil like hatred, that would destroy and smash everything. And after a while, not only against women in general, but also against those who've got money. For he, who took her from me, must have been one of these to have been able to satisfy her damnable cravings for rings and diamonds and silks and

satins. *Then*, my boy, for the first time in my life I understood the sentiments of those who would kill and annihilate all those above them. The higher the better. Then, when you think of your lost happiness, your wrecked life — a desire comes over you to cut the whole world to pieces — [*long pause*].

HELBIG [*almost to himself*]: Queiss!

QUEISS [*takes a deep breath*]: Ah — at that time, my boy — at that time. But now — I feel contented! Do you want to know why?

HELBIG [*looks up at him*].

QUEISS: Come with me to the stables and I'll show you Dolores. I tell you an animal like that is far superior to any human being. To hell with them all, particularly the women. Now you take a horse — take its head between your hands — and the nose, I tell you it's softer than any woman's arm. And how beautiful and intelligent and obedient they are. Of course you must go at them in the right way. And those who are shy at first and unwilling, they are the very best. They have character. Come with me to the stables.

HELBIG [*half convinced*]: Yes, I'll go. What else can I do? Yes, yes, you are right.

[*With renewed suspicion*] But one thing you must tell me, honor bright. Have you noticed anything suspicious between Clara and — Lauffen?

QUEISS: Lauffen? No! Not that I remember. But why not? He's a Lieutenant, an officer. That's bait, you know. And then again it may have been one of the boys. We've got some strapping fellows in the troop now, I tell you. You know the old saying: Love goes where it's sent even if it falls on a dung heap. Take my advice: Let her alone!

HELBIG: Then you know nothing — really nothing?

QUEISS: Not a thing, my boy.— But wait! A while ago I came here for the Sergeant Major. I found them both together—here.

HELBIG: Well, well? — I mean, what were they doing?

QUEISS: Hell, man! The company room is hardly the place for —! She stood here, and he there. Of course, with my boots and spurs they could hear me from afar.

HELBIG [*fretting*]: So they were already here at that time —

QUEISS: May be just an accident. Let her alone. To hell with women! Come along with me, I'll show you Dolores.

VOLKHARDT [*enters. Has heard the last words*

of Queiss]: There's lots of time for that later, Queiss. I want the boy to myself for a little while. [*Goes to Otto and shakes him by the hand.*] At last. Welcome — welcome home, Otto.

HELBIG: Thank you, father.

VOLKHARDT: Have you reported all around?

HELBIG: Yes, father.

VOLKHARDT: Colonel? Captain? Lieutenant von Hoeven? Lieutenant von Lauffen?

HELBIG: I've made the rounds, father.

VOLKHARDT: That's right! Duty above all else. [*Sees Queiss.*] Oh — you wanted the bill of lading for the Woillachs, Queiss! [*Finds it on table.*] Here you are [*gives it to him*].

QUEISS: Thank you, Sergeant Major. [*Goes to door.*]

VOLKHARDT: I'll send the boy out to you during the noon feed. Then you can show him Dolores.

QUEISS: Very well, Sergeant Major. [*With an encouraging glance at Otto — exits.*]

VOLKHARDT: Now then, Otto, come, let me have a good look at you. You surely have improved, my son.

HELBIG: Well, father, in two years —

VOLKHARDT: And I needn't tell you how glad I am you're back again. We'll be the same happy family as of old — [*starts*

putting papers away into drawers]. The devil, boy. Come on — say something yourself —! Oh! — Have you seen Clara?

HELBIG: Yes! I saw her and shook hands with her here, a few moments ago.

VOLKHARDT: That's right. Lieutenant von Lauffen had just called me to see the Captain. Well, Otto! What do you think of him? The Lieutenant, I mean! Isn't he a joy to look at? He'll be like his father some day. He'll make his mark, I tell you. But to come back to Clara. How did you find her?

HELBIG: Oh, I don't know. The same as ever, I suppose. She was glad to see me back, of course.

VOLKHARDT: Of course she was. And she threw her arms around your neck and — well —?

HELBIG: Well — not exactly that —

VOLKHARDT: It's all right, Otto. You needn't try to keep it from me. I know you had expected to find things different — poor boy!

HELBIG: Why, father, I don't know what you mean! Clara —

VOLKHARDT: Silence in the ranks! There, there — I know! But, Otto, my boy, don't hang your head on that account.

HELBIG [*still trying to deceive him*]: Why, of course not, father —

VOLKHARDT [*with a gesture of impatience*]:

For you see there is really no reason for it. Those are women's foibles. It'll all pass away in time. For right down in her heart Clara has remained the same little girl as of old. [*Partly to himself*] Hang it all, I ought to know my own child! I'll answer for her every time. Only lately my mind is — I don't know — I don't seem to be able to think —

[*Signal for the noon feed is heard without.*]

HELBIG: Fodder signal!

VOLKHARDT [*has listened*]: Yes —

HELBIG [*as Volkhardt is going to door*]: You are not going to mention this to Clara, are you, father?

VOLKHARDT: Certainly not, Otto. I'm not a fool. I know her too well for that, my boy. I know my own girl.

[*Clatter of feet is heard without, of many men rushing down the stairs.*]

VOLKHARDT: Just watch me and see how I'll teach these laggards to attend to duty. [*He opens the door with a jerk. A few privates are seen passing. Others trying to pass. Some with curry and brush. A few with rations on plates slip by in the opposite direction.*]

VOLKHARDT: Donnerwetter, fellows, what does this mean? Will you betake yourselves to the stables at once? Younghans,

you lout. Halt! About face! March! First the horse, and then the man. Ah! Here comes our friend Michalek.

MICHALEK [*appears in door with plate and ration, masticating frantically*].

VOLKHARDT: Have you attended to your horses? Your own and the Lieutenant's?

MICHALEK [*with a mighty effort to swallow, shakes his head — would leave*].

VOLKHARDT: Halt! About face! March!

MICHALEK [*stops and swallows*]: Isse diss piece fine meat. Fet! Doo much fet!

VOLKHARDT: Will you look at the pig! [*Imitating him*] Doo much fet! You glutton. Quick! Take it over to your bunk and then —

MICHALEK: Danke, pan Sergeant Major. [*Quickly exits.*]

[*A few more trying to sneak by.*]

VOLKHARDT [*bellows at them*]: Confounded lot of shirkers. I'd hate to be your horse. [*Slams door, goes back to table, puts the last papers into drawer, locks the chest.*] There's a troop for you. Now come along, Otto. Hold up your head. I tell you everything will come out right in the end.

HELBIG [*following him to the door*]: Let's hope it will, father.

[*Curtain*]

ACT II

Scene: Lieutenant von Lauffen's quarters in the barracks. Walls whitewashed slightly green tint. Center door leading out upon the corridor. Door to the right leading into bedroom. On the opposite side two windows with striped roller shades, same as Act I. Faded woolen portieres or hangings on same. Between the windows a gentleman's small dresser with mirror. On same are the usual toilet articles, brushes, bottle of bay rum, etc. In front of the window a plain and not too large flat-top desk of oak and an office chair of the same material. At the window a large and comfortable wicker chair, with deep seat, and well filled with pillows and cushions. On wall left of center door a bookshelf, to the right of center door a hat rack, in the corner a stove. Next to the bedroom door the usual brown-colored wardrobe. In the foreground, with its head turned toward the right side of the room, a divan. Within reaching distance of same, a smoking table or stand. Pictures of military and sporting subjects. Photographs and an arrangement of saber, crop and riding whips,

etc., tied with ribbons, with programs and cotillion prizes as decorations. Upon the desk is a lighted lamp with china shade (white). The window shades are not drawn.

MICHALEK [*in duck service jacket, is hastily dusting the desk. No cap*].

SPIESS [*with company order book in his hand enters*]: Here, you thick-headed Pollock, is the company order book for your lieutenant!

MICHALEK [*with dignity*]: Iss good! Lay 'em down! On dable!

SPIESS [*lays book on desk. In passing slaps Michalek on head and goes to smoking stand; attempts to pilfer a cigarette*].

MICHALEK [*pounces on him like a hawk and defends his master's property*]: Iss you crazy, Spiess? Kusch! Kusch! Has Lieutenant count him every one!

SPIESS: You blockhead! He won't miss a couple!

MICHALEK: No! no! Has he count him every one!

SPIESS [*tries to take the cigarettes by force*]: You silly fool! Will you give me a few?

MICHALEK [*pretending to hear some one coming*]: Quick! Comes Lieutenant! Kusch! Kusch!

SPIESS [*frightened, exits quickly*].

MICHALEK [*deliberately goes to the smoking*

table and calmly appropriates several packages of cigarettes, hiding them in his blouse with a grin, Lights one. Goes to dressing table, smells of the different bottles, pours some of the contents on his hand and puts on his head ad lib. *This must not be overdone. He goes back to divan and lies down, comfortably blowing clouds of smoke in the air. His face is turned away from the door*].

VON LAUFFEN [*in the meantime has opened the door and permitted von Hoeven to step inside the room*].

MICHALEK [*smoking violently, now waves back with his hand*]: Kusch! Kusch! Spiess! Comes the Lieutenant!

VON LAUFFEN [*carefully tiptoes up to him and strikes him a heavy blow with his crop*].

MICHALEK [*jumps up terror stricken and comes to attention*].

Iss Lieutenant here already?

VON LAUFFEN [*quietly*]: The assurance of this swine! Not only lounging on my divan, but also smoking my cigarettes! [*Calmly takes the still smoking cigarette from Michalek's mouth and throws it on the floor.*]

MICHALEK: Cigarette fall on floor! Michalek think Lieutenant no smoke, cigarette fall on dirty floor. Then Michalek smoke cigarette.

VON LAUFFEN: You pilfered it, you pig.

That's the whole story! [*Gives him another blow with crop and points to door.*] Kusch! Kusch! Allez!

MICHALEK [*glides by him, picks up the cigarette from the floor, and dodges to the door*].

VON HOEVEN: Halt, pan Michalek! First we will have the soldier's prayer! Article of War, number two!

MICHALEK [*rattling it off*]: De inviolable preservation of de oath to his colors iss de first duty of de soldier—

VON HOEVEN [*after trying to interrupt him several times*]: Enough, enough! That will do—

MICHALEK [*undisturbed*]: Secondly de profession of de soldier—

VON HOEVEN [*raising his foot*]: Will you get out?

MICHALEK [*exits quickly*].

VON LAUFFEN [*from the beginning of the scene he is rather unsteady, but gradually regains his self-composure*]: Now, then! What was it you wanted, Hoeven? The sheets, Massmuenster and Sulzbach! From one to twenty-five thousand! Wasn't it?

VON HOEVEN: Yes! My orderly will return them in the morning. [*Makes himself comfortable in the wicker chair.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*has searched in his drawer and found the two sheets. Hands them to Hoeven*]:

There's no hurry about it! There! [*Walks restlessly about the room.*] The old man got after you today with a vengeance. He was in a fine temper. For a moment I saw his loving glances rest on me! I said to myself: Here comes my turn, when — [*laughs*].

VON HOEVEN: Yes! It's a dog's life!

VON LAUFFEN: Lord knows! Twenty hours for duty and four for sleep — that will be about the order of the day for the next two weeks. [*Reads in the daybook which Spiess has brought in.*] Twenty-five special orders for tomorrow! The devil! Man was surely born a slave to duty! [*Throws the book on the floor.*] I am tired — tired,— tired — especially of this! Upon my word!

VON HOEVEN: It is to laugh! — Ha-ha-ha-ha!

VON LAUFFEN: Now seriously —

VON HOEVEN: Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!

VON LAUFFEN: It's a fact, upon —

VON HOEVEN: Upon your word! I know! But when the alarm is sounded at three A.M. you will be the first man on the ramparts, and woe to the poor devil of your men who is not at his post and as lively as a cricket! And later, should one of our red-trousered friends bob up across the border you will straighten up defiantly in your saddle and everything about you will tremble with the

desire for the fray! As if you would throw yourself upon the hated foe! To the attack! To the attack! Forward! Charge!

VON LAUFFEN [*carried away*]: After all, that is the object and purpose of the whole thing!

VON HOEVEN: And it is because of this spirit that I like you and have grown so fond of you!

VON LAUFFEN: Hoeven, you flatter me!

VON HOEVEN: Not at all! Ah, bless you, my boy, if I only had such a confoundedly comfortable armchair in my den — !

VON LAUFFEN [*walking about again*]: But, Hoeven, aren't you going to draw your plans tonight?

VON HOEVEN: I intend to, before going to bed!

VON LAUFFEN: Well, don't you think it's time to begin?

VON HOEVEN: It wouldn't be the first time I've drilled all night! No, sonny, you are not going to get rid of me as easily as all that!

VON LAUFFEN: That wasn't my object!

VON HOEVEN [*jestingly making a deprecating gesture*]: Tut, tut! However, I will promise to arise from this almost criminally comfortable armchair and disappear if you will frankly confess first of all that you expect a lady —!

VON LAUFFEN [*quickly — embarrassed*]: Nonsense! Nothing of the sort!

VON HOEVEN: Aha! I thought so!

VON LAUFFEN: No! Upon my word —

VON HOEVEN: Fortunately you still belong to that category of young men who blush when caught in a fib! You can trust me! Who is she?

VON LAUFFEN: Really, Hoeven! You're on the wrong track! Fact! Upon my word!

VON HOEVEN [*undisturbed*]: Is it Francoise Maillard, the beauty from Burgundy? Or Mignon Laporte, who insists she is from Paris, but who in reality is from Limburg and the forgetful daughter of an honest cheesemaker? The Gendarme has shown me her birth certificate. Or is it the Munich belle, Blonde Bertha from the Lionbrew? In that case I have some time to stay, for she tends bar till eleven!

VON LAUFFEN [*smilingly shakes his head*]: Don't trouble yourself, Hoeven! You are entirely and absolutely on the wrong track!

VON HOEVEN: No I'm not! See here! When we are at the club, either at billiards or the more intellectual Skat, and out there the first note of Taps is sounded, from that moment your opponents have won! If I am present, I confess it takes a positive

effort on my part to play as carelessly as yourself! For I refuse to win under such conditions! But I am convinced the sound of Taps has to you a hidden meaning — say what you like!

VON LAUFFEN [*with a nervous laugh*]: Hoeven, you're smoking a bad brand!

VON HOEVEN: Well, it's one of your own! Look here, Lauffen! Seriously! I want to draw your attention to a peril, a danger that's threatening you!

VON LAUFFEN: Concerning the service? Perhaps a warning from the old man?

VON HOEVEN: On the contrary! Nothing but friendly advice, and I hope you will consider it so. Look here! — Hm — Hm! You are living here door to door with one of the sweetest girls tramping — I beg pardon, I meant tripping — within the range of our military domain! I mean the daughter of our honest old Sergeant Major — old Volkhardt!

VON LAUFFEN [*leaning in dark niche of the window, as indifferent as possible*]: Well? — and?

VON HOEVEN: Well? — and? That is the danger threatening you, Lauffen! I have seen or heard nothing that would give me the slightest reason for suspicion, but I consider it my duty as your comrade to warn you before it is too late!

VON LAUFFEN: I assure you you have no reason for your fears! None at all! Fact, upon my word!

VON HOEVEN: That relieves me, I assure you! In the first place she is too good a girl to be trifled with, and then, the honor of our faithful Sergeant Major must not be soiled! — Right?

VON LAUFFEN [*after a short and uncertain pause*]: Why certainly — of course!

VON HOEVEN [*remains silent for a while*]: You see, he who is condemned to exile in this little burg either takes to drink or he turns philosopher! Since I have no money for wine, I have taken up my studious abode in the cask the others have emptied. Among other subjects I have been occupying myself with the psychology of the Lieutenant — the officer. By official edict he receives the esteem and respect of the world in general. You follow me? In return he obligates himself to certain duties and responsibilities which probably are of little meaning to the civilian in time of peace! Unfortunately! This honor bestowed upon us entails the obligation to refrain from all avoidable offense! Self-restraint becomes to us a vital necessity, particularly as regards our passions. We must observe it for the sake of our pro-

fessional honor, to avoid giving the yellow journals the slightest opportunity for ill-mannered jests and ridiculous prevarications.

VON LAUFFEN [*forced*]: Yes, yes! You are right!

VON HOEVEN: You understand me perfectly, don't you, old man?

VON LAUFFEN: Certainly! Of course!

VON HOEVEN: Good! That is what I wanted to say to you!

VON LAUFFEN [*after a pause*]: Thank you, Hoeven! [*Hastily*] But really — you need have no fears on that score.

VON HOEVEN: Good! Very good! I surely am glad to hear it! [*Arises lazily from chair. In a lighter tone*] And I regret that that is all I have to say to you. [*Sings*] So fare thee well, beloved chair [*yawns*]. To think that I have got to sit up the rest of the night — ! [*Shoves the two sheets with which he has been toying up to now into the cuff of his coat.*] I almost envy you, Lauffen! [*Goes to the smoking stand, takes a cigarette, lights it on the lamp.*] There is one thing in which we are all alike! We pilfer your cigarettes, Michalek as well as Ernest von Hoeven! [*At the door — singing*] "Sleep, my baby, sleep; your father tends the —"! What division did the old man say it was?

VON LAUFFEN: The forty-first!

VON HOEVEN: Right! So it was! The forty-first! 'Night, Lauffen!

VON LAUFFEN: 'Night, old man!

VON HOEVEN [*from without*]: 'Night! [*Exits.*]

[*At this moment the melancholy sound of Taps is heard in the distance.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*has remained at the door for a moment. Taps sounded. During the following scene he must exhibit a great internal struggle. He goes back to the desk — slowly divesting himself of his coat and hanging it in wardrobe on a hanger. He puts on his itewka. All is done hesitatingly and spasmodically. At last he picks up a green lampshade from desk, contemplating it long and intently. Finally, overcoming his reluctance, he resolutely places same on the lamp. Then quickly goes to the door and calls*]: Michalek!

MICHALEK [*from without*]: Service, pan Lieutenant! [*Appears center with riding boots and blacking brush.*]

VON LAUFFEN: You can go to bed now, Michalek. But close your door, you lout! The whole corridor smells of shoe polish!

MICHALEK: Service, Lieutenant! [*Exit.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*closes the door and draws the shades. Returns to center of room, waiting nervously. Then goes to door again, opens same, and listens*].

CLARA [*a knitted black shawl around her shoulders, flies into his arms*].

VON LAUFFEN: Clara! [*A very subdued exclamation. They embrace and kiss each other repeatedly. He then leads her to the chair at the desk, goes back to door and locks it.*]

CLARA [*sits down, catching her breath, lays off her shawl, looks around, rises and picks up the book from the floor*]: Michalek is a sloven. The Captain's order book on the floor!

VON LAUFFEN [*has gone to her*]: Don't blame it on Michalek. I threw it there myself.

CLARA: But why?

VON LAUFFEN: Why? Just cast your lovely eyes on this. [*Opens book for her inspection.*] It's maddening!

CLARA [*teasing*]: What is?

VON LAUFFEN [*with pretended pouting*]: The inhuman amount of work a fellow is expected to do here. It's positively brutal.

CLARA [*reading*]: At seven A.M. continuation of target practice! [*Shakes her head*] Dear, dear! It is hard, you poor abused boy. A stone-breaker has it easier than you, poor dear. He isn't pulled out of bed at two in the morning! He can have his sleep out! [*Lays down book and picks up shawl — in jest.*] You must go right to bed, and I won't keep you up any longer.

VON LAUFFEN [*as she would go to the door he*

holds her]: No you don't! [*He looks at her, then both begin to laugh.*] You little rascal! [*They kiss.*]

CLARA [*in his arms*]: Darling!

VON LAUFFEN [*up and down several times, silently looking at her*]: Do you know, Clara, that for quite some time I couldn't bring myself to give the signal tonight? [*Toys with shade.*]

CLARA [*regards him with silent, questioning glance.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*hesitatingly*]: You see — a little while ago — just as I was about to place the shade on the lamp—it occurred to me — You surely know how happy I am, even at the sight of you — but — it suddenly occurred to me that we were doing your father a grievous wrong —

CLARA [*hasn't taken her eyes from him*].

VON LAUFFEN: Yes — a serious and cruel wrong! Fact, upon my word; for it is hardly probable that he would countenance these — our little secrets I mean — and — so it occurred to me it was about time to give the future a little thought. We can't go on forever like this, and —

CLARA [*cuts him short with a calm but decided gesture. After a short pause*]: And did it occur to you today for the first time?

VON LAUFFEN: Well, dear — no! Not ex-

actly! I have thought of it a good many times before perhaps, but you know I am not given to fretting or worry, so I did my best to forget it as quickly as possible. But a little while ago I simply couldn't shake it off.

CLARA [*calmly and determined*]: On the contrary I have busied myself with that subject so often that I have come to an understanding with myself long ago. [*She seats herself in the reed chair during Lauffen's speech, now rests her hands on her knees and speaks partly to herself.*] I had to do it from the very beginning. Lord knows there was a time when my sole desire consisted in pleasing my father and that alone, until — you came here. I fought and struggled against my love for you, but all in vain. Slowly and gradually it overcame me, until every fiber within me seemed to thrill with longing and desire for you — and all thoughts of evil or wrong were stifled in my conscience. From that moment I considered my love for you as my right — my legitimate right, through which alone I would find my happiness — in spite of all the world. Then it was — when I came to you — [*she has risen and has gone to him*].

VON LAUFFEN [*embracing her*]: Darling!

CLARA: Yes, dear! I knew what I was doing, clearly and distinctly, and if I had not been willing, you would still be asking for your first kiss. But I felt that with you I would find happiness; perhaps the only happiness allotted to me in this world, and no matter what the consequences, I stretched out my hand and seized —

VON LAUFFEN: Clara — ! You — ! I never considered you capable of such — ! It is grand — I might almost say noble! No, girl! I never would have believed it of you.

CLARA: How improvident you are! You, too, surely have some thoughts of the future!

VON LAUFFEN: No, Clara dear. I am a fatalist. In spite of all we do we drift and drift, relentlessly driven by our fate.

CLARA: If I had only resisted you — ! But I presume you are right. We are blindly driven by fate.

VON LAUFFEN [*something in her voice startles him*]: You mean?

CLARA: Well — Otto! You know!

VON LAUFFEN [*shakes his head*].

CLARA: Sergeant Helbig, who returned today from the riding academy, my foster brother. I was promised to him in a way —! Not openly, and yet it was considered all settled. He has returned fully expecting to marry me —

VON LAUFFEN: You — marry a fellow like that? Are you mad? I can't understand how you permitted things to come to that point. Upon my word. [*Excitedly, up and down.*] I dare say the lout presumed to take advantage of the fact —

CLARA: You seem to forget that I have something to say to that.

VON LAUFFEN: Fortunate for him. I would have made him pay for it.

CLARA: You would do nothing of the sort. But we must be careful of him. For — well! You can imagine how he feels toward me now. And then you, too, have aroused his suspicions!

VON LAUFFEN [*defiantly*]: You don't tell me? Perhaps he thinks I ought to fear him now — ! [*Suddenly*] The devil! If he should intimate anything to your father —

CLARA: No, no! He promised to leave father out of it and Otto always keeps his word.

VON LAUFFEN [*doubtingly*]: Well I am not so —

CLARA: Yes he will — even if he is only a non-commissioned officer. And now you must promise me to avoid the slightest chance of a rupture —

VON LAUFFEN: I'll do nothing of the sort. Put myself under obligation to a bumpkin like him! I might as well eliminate myself entirely.

CLARA: Don't misunderstand me. I only meant for you to be on your guard. I don't know — I always feel as if he were behind me — watching and spying on me [*shyly glances at the door*].

VON LAUFFEN [*unconsciously affected, does the same*]: You seem to be in a bad mood to-night, dear. You see specters — really, upon my word.

CLARA [*startled*]: Listen! — Wasn't that some one at the door?

VON LAUFFEN [*tiptoes to door and listens*]: Nonsense! 'Twas only the guard relief!

CLARA: Yes! I suppose so!

VON LAUFFEN [*has seated himself on divan and drawn Clara, who stood in front of him, on his knees*]: Do you see? Now come! Be sensible!

CLARA [*embraces and kisses him*]: Yes, dearest!

VON LAUFFEN: Come! Cheer up! [*Softly*] Who knows how soon this all has got to come to an end? What's the matter, girl? Don't be in the dumps!

CLARA [*jumps up*]: You're right! What's the use anyway? It can't help matters. You see, Kurt, when I know you are here waiting for me the time passes so slowly that I am often tempted to turn the hands of our cuckoo clock ahead. And when at last

the trumpeter has sounded Taps, life really seems to begin. All the worries and annoyances of the day are at an end. I look ahead to joy and happiness — only to joy and happiness. Then everything within me drives me to you, and I must obey! Even if my father were to step in my way and say: "Girl, it means my life" — I would — I could not hesitate. [*She has sunk on her knees before him. He remains seated.*] Kurt! ! !

VON LAUFFEN [*a long kiss*]: Clara! — You love me so much — so dearly?

CLARA [*nods — with tears in her eyes*]: I would do anything for your sake! Everything in the world I would give up for you — that you shall not suffer — not suffer!

VON LAUFFEN [*shudders*]: And why do you love me so, Clara?

CLARA [*rises and passes her hand across her brow*]: I don't know! I love you because in you I see all that is grand and beautiful in life to me. You see — as long as I can remember we have lived here about three hours' march from the French line. Our regiment will be the first to go if it ever comes to war. Now everything seems calm and peaceful around here, but wait and see how quickly things change when the time comes. Then you'd rather be here

than anywhere else. Then there seems to be something in the air as it — as if we were standing on a powder mine and the match already lighted to set it off. And the natives hereabouts have changed all of a sudden. You'll hear no longer "Mademoiselle Clara, Plait-il? En demi tasse?" Their smiles have turned to furtive glances, as if they really pitied us already! And here in the fort there is a scurry and a bustle! I remember one time, when the saddles hung ready in the stables for a whole week — for a campaign — yes, yes, for real war. During the night the squad commanders received the ammunition for their men and up there [*points*] the dynamite was piled up in heaps — all ready and waiting, until word came that the danger was averted. Ah, Kurt, that was a life — that was excitement —

VON LAUFFEN: Yes, dear, and the next time it will be the same thing all over again. At the last alarm we were ready for the field in twenty-seven minutes.

CLARA [*whispering*]: And you have command of the patrol that is to blow up the railroad viaduct over yonder at Bas La Chapelle.

VON LAUFFEN: How did you learn that, Clara? That is supposed to be strictly

secret! No one can know — no one must know or even suspect that we can reach the place, or that the Red Mountain gorge is passable to a cavalry patrol.

CLARA: You see when I read your name in the mobilization lists I was determined to learn your assignment, so I wormed it out of father. Oh, I'll not betray you.

VON LAUFFEN: You're a darling girl. But you can't imagine how proud I was when the Colonel selected me for that task. Me — almost the youngest lieutenant in the regiment. If I succeed in turning the trick — they are done for over there. We figure at least a day and a half for repairs and that's an eternity when it's a question of minutes. — And I will carry it out — or — [*whistles softly*].

CLARA: Whether or no — it is all the same! For from that ride you will never return alive. [*Has seated herself on the divan.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*thoughtfully*]: They will never permit me to escape, you mean? [*Jollier*] And can you imagine a nobler death than that? To die for your country? [*Up and down several times, meditating — suddenly stops in front of her and looks her in the eyes — pause — kneels.*] And have I not already been the happiest man on earth? Yes, Clara, I wish — I long for such a death!

CLARA [*bends over him and kisses him fervently*]: Kurt!

VON LAUFFEN: Would it not be best?

CLARA: Yes, 'twould be a beautiful death! [*Whispers*] And I would know my way then — the way I would have to — follow — ! [*Long and fervent embrace.*]

VON LAUFFEN: Clara, how beautiful you are!

CLARA: Darling boy.

VON LAUFFEN: And do you love me, dear? [*Softly*] Do you?

[*A timid knock at the door.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*startled*].

CLARA [*sits motionless*].

[*There's a knock at the door, a trifle louder than the first.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*has risen and leads Clara noiselessly to bedroom door, the while motioning with forefinger to his lips to be silent. After Clara has disappeared in the bedroom he calls*]: Well! — What is it?

[*There's no answer, but the knock is repeated.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*goes resolutely to the door and opens same. Helbig is seen in corridor without* —]: Helbig! What do you want at this late hour?

HELBIG: Your pardon, Lieutenant! May I ask you for a few moments' conversation?

VON LAUFFEN: But this is no time nor place! Tomorrow, Helbig!

HELBIG: I humbly ask you, sir, only a few moments!

VON LAUFFEN [*after a moment's hesitation*]: Very well! Come in!

HELBIG [*enters and comes to attention*].

VON LAUFFEN [*bruskly, but not roughly*]: Now what do you want? But be quick about it!

HELBIG [*seems excited — and apparently has been drinking*]: Your pardon, Lieutenant — I — I —

VON LAUFFEN: Well? — What in thunder, man! Why don't you speak?

HELBIG: I — I was formerly engaged to the daughter of the Sergeant-Major Volkhardt — to Miss Clara — and — and —

VON LAUFFEN [*by this time has entirely recovered his composure*]: Well, that is all very nice, Helbig, but was it really necessary to apprise me of that fact at this time of night? Man, have you lost your senses entirely?

HELBIG [*roughly*]: No, sir! Your pardon, Lieutenant, that's not all! Today I returned from the riding academy —

VON LAUFFEN [*impatiently*]: Well? Well?

HELBIG: And I — I found my prospective bride entirely changed.

VON LAUFFEN: Sergeant Helbig! Man! I cannot understand what in the world I have to do with all this! Now try and be a

sensible fellow and go back to your rooms. You don't seem to know yourself what you want!

HELBIG: You will pardon me, Lieutenant — I — I humbly ask you, sir — to forget for once our difference in rank. If I may say so, we are also human! I have come to you man to man and I pray you humbly — please do not bring disgrace on Clara —

VON LAUFFEN [*almost yelling*]: Helbig! — Have you gone stark mad?

HELBIG: No, Lieutenant von Lauffen! I ask you to kindly remember that it can only end in misfortune. And not for Clara alone. You surely must consider her father. The old Sergeant Major has honorably served his country for thirty-three years and I assure you it would kill him if Clara should —

VON LAUFFEN: Helbig! Now I command you to hold your tongue and leave this room.

HELBIG: But, Lieutenant, I ask nothing wrong. I implore you — humbly implore you, Lieutenant — and I am asking nothing for myself. Only for Clara, sir — Clara and her old father!

VON LAUFFEN [*points to the door*]: You heard what I said! Leave this room at once!

HELBIG [*stubbornly*]: No! I won't!

VON LAUFFEN: What?

HELBIG [*immediately changes back to humble demeanor*]: Yes, yes, I'll go at once, sir! But first I must have the assurance from your own lips that you have no affair with Clara. I humbly ask you, sir, on your word of honor —

VON LAUFFEN: Fellow, are you drunk? Get out!

HELBIG [*starts angrily — but controls himself once more*]: I crave your pardon, sir! I ask but little — very little! Only one word!

VON LAUFFEN: Sergeant Helbig, for the last time I command you to leave this room.

HELBIG [*straightens up with a jerk*]: Now I understand. I catch the drift of your argument. Clara is here!

VON LAUFFEN [*unconsciously turns and glances at the bedroom door*].

HELBIG: She's not in her own rooms, that I know, Lieutenant von Lauffen. Therefore she must be here! [*Points to the bedroom door.*] In there! [*Starts in that direction.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*seizes his saber, hanging on back of chair and gets in his way*]: Not another step, fellow, or —

[*As Helbig insists on advancing toward the bedroom von Lauffen draws his saber and strikes Helbig over the head. Helbig has thrown up his hand to guard himself —*

staggers back. Then with a cry of rage he rushes at von Lauffen, shoves him aside, and throws open the bedroom door.]

HELBIG [*after one glance into the bedroom, laughs out discordantly*]: Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! [*He slowly falls back dazed, holding his hand to his forehead.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*rushes past him to center door and calls hoarsely*]: Michalek! !

MICHALEK [*from without, invisible*]: Service, pan Lieutenant!

VON LAUFFEN: Call the corporal of the guard.

MICHALEK [*invisible*]: Service, Lieutenant! [*Gradually retreating in the distance*] Corporal of the guard! Corporal of the guard! . . .

QUEISS [*after a short time appears in door. He wears the bandolier of corporal in service and reports*]: Corporal of the guard, sir!

VON LAUFFEN: Is that you, Queiss?

QUEISS: Service, sir! As substitute for —

VON LAUFFEN [*interrupts him*]: 'Tis well! I want you to place Sergeant Helbig under arrest!

QUEISS [*throws a glance of startled surprise at Helbig and hesitates a moment unconsciously*].

VON LAUFFEN: For having violently attacked me, his superior officer.

QUEISS: Service, sir! [*Goes to Helbig and takes him by the arm.*] Come!

[*Helbig follows him without a show of resistance, only when he reaches the door he casts one last glance at the bedroom door.*]

QUEISS [*stops surprised and follows his glance. Then comes to attention and follows Helbig off*].

VON LAUFFEN [*remains standing at the door with drawn saber, and as he slowly lowers the weapon the curtain falls*].

[END OF ACT SECOND]

ACT III

Scene: A large room temporarily arranged for the court martial. The walls have a gray tint. In the back a center door, with the usual inventory list hanging on same. On the right, two windows with roller shades, striped. Right and left of center door and on left side of stage a row of lockers, with stocklocks and small shields, on which are the names of the individual men. Shields made of papier mache. In the left corner is an iron stove, in front of which is a cuspidor. In front of the windows a long table, with a plain green cloth cover. A number of plain wooden chairs. In front, with his back to the audience, is seated the Recording Sergeant; then in rotation running up stage are seated Count von Lehdenburg, Major Paschke, First Councillor, First Lieut. Hagemeister. At right angle and adjoining this table is another at which are seated, starting from the corner and facing the audience, Second and Third Councillors. At the end, next to door, is the surgeon. The defendant sits at a small table almost center to the left of it, facing the

audience. To the right of same table, Lieut. von Hoeven, defending Helbig. The latter is seated on a stool. On the other side of stage are two chairs for witnesses which are unoccupied at the opening of the act. All the military are in full dress regalia, the officers without field ties or bandoliers. The helmets are on tables. The defendant appears in service uniform, without saber. During the action the court martial orderly — infantry sergeant — keeps his position — standing — at the door. It is bright sunshine without, about the middle of the day. The proceedings are at a standstill. The recorder is writing and looking over his papers busily. Beside him the only other one seated is the Second Councillor, who is lazily rocking himself in his chair. The prosecutor is standing in his place and looking through his papers in front of him. Paschke, Hagemeister and the First Councillor form a group at the front window, watching Count von Lehdenburg.

PASCHKE [*to the recorder*]: Sergeant! Would you kindly go and once more inquire into the condition of the defendant? The proceedings must come to an end sometime!

RECORDER: At your service, Major! [*Exits.*]

LEHDENBURG [*spraying the walls on opposite side of stage with an atomizer containing lavender water, all the while keeping up a*

rapid conversation]: With your permission, Major, there is certainly a marked difference in the odor of the soldier in the open field from that in the enclosed barracks. My cuirassiers, in spite of the fact that I always ride to windward — they possess an odor — it is the odor of the horseman! But the soldier in his quarters smells, so to say, to heaven. Fact! Always!

HAGEMEISTER: But worse than all is this dreadful moisture. The walls are simply dripping.

PASCHKE: Not to mention all this filth.

LEHDENBURG: Quite correct! A horrible mixture of *sudor Humanus* and soft soap. Men with weaker nerves under these conditions would have broken down without a doubt. [*Places the atomizer on the window shelf.*] I consider it no less than scandalous to refuse us quarters reasonably fit for a human being. [*Turns to First Councillor.*] And the appropriations for new headquarters have again been denied? It is unbelievable!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: It has been promised for the coming year. For the present the Reichstag has seen fit to strike it out.

LEHDENBURG: Ah, yes! The Reichstag! Remarkable chaps, upon my word! Should be compelled to sit here and dispense jus-

tice! Of course! For themselves they had erected a magnificent palace! We must suffer. However, the food up there is abominable! Major, have you ever lunched in the Reichstag buffet?

MAJOR [*short*]: No!

LEHDENBURG: Interesting, I assure you! At the adjoining table sat Bebel, the socialist. Drinking a small pilsener, eating a ham sandwich with knife and fork, like any other well-bred citizen. Very interesting, indeed. But as I said before, the food is abominable.

PASCHKE [*coldly turns away*]: Is that so? [*and goes to window together with First Councillor*].

LEHDENBURG [*aside to Hagemeister*]: Rather uncommunicative individual, this Mister Paschke! Have struggled to entertain him, but apparently in vain.

HAGEMEISTER [*shrugs his shoulders*].

LEHDENBURG: Oh, I understand. Heavy artillery! To secure a hit with such gigantic ordinance is no easy matter, I dare say. And the caliber is bound to have its psychological effect on the men! The law of cause and effect! As per example: Mister Paschke! However, I frankly confess I have no burning desire to pose here as a dispenser of divine justice. Do you know

that I have missed a splendid fox hunt on account of it? You can imagine my disappointment!

HAGEMEISTER: Oh! Speaking of the hunt, is your English mare, Miss Page, in condition again?

LEHDENBURG: Yes! In splendid condition! But tell me, my dear Lieutenant, how did you know I was the proprietor of a Miss Page?

HAGEMEISTER: I was fortunate enough to have seen you pictured astride of her in *Die Woche.*

LEHDENBURG [*laughing*]: My dear sir! You saw the picture of Miss Page no doubt, but do you know who was astride her?

HAGEMEISTER: Well — you yourself, of course!

LEHDENBURG: Cuirassier Karl Abromeit of Naujenningken, my worthy orderly. [*Takes Hagemeister confidentially by the arm*] You see, my dear Hagemeister, *Die Woche* is, I might say, a fairly respectable publication; in fact, his majesty's portrait appears frequently in its pages. But imagine this situation: Some one — let us say Mina Meyer if you like — beholds my picture, and she says: "Elsa, dear, I had pictured Count von Lehdenburg to myself an entirely different looking

individual"! Would be painfully distressing for me, would it not? But as it stands now, such an occurrence is quite impossible!

ASSISTANT SURGEON [*a young man — a one-year volunteer — enters now, together with recorder*]: I beg to report that the condition of Sergeant Helbig will permit the continuation of the proceedings.

PASCHKE: Thank you, doctor! But what was the matter with him?

ASSISTANT SURGEON: A fainting spell brought about by a weakened condition and perhaps the excitement of the cross examination. Then the guard house inspector reports that the defendant has persistently refused to take nourishment since his arrest.

PASCHKE: Indeed? And — how is he now?

ASSISTANT SURGEON: He has had a cup of beef broth and a sip of wine. Quite sufficient for the present, I think.

PASCHKE: Then you think we may safely proceed?

ASSISTANT SURGEON: I think so, Major!

PASCHKE [*looking at his watch*]: Well — let us grant the poor devil a few minutes more. Thank you, doctor.

ASSISTANT SURGEON [*exits with a bow*].

PASCHKE: Queer fellow, this Helbig. Refused to take nourishment! At the same time whole case seems clear enough!

LEHDENBURG: It is, Major — it is! Can't understand the reasons for all this formality — this voluminous amount of hearsay testimony. Unnecessarily increases the costs of the case. And the result? The anti-government and radical press will again be raging about the ever-increasing military burdens. Worst of it is, we can't blame them. And what will be the result? Who will be the sufferers? We, of course. Through lack of funds the Reichstag will compel us to abide in such miserable hovels as these for another year!

MAJOR [*part anger, part jest*]: By that time you will no longer be councillor of the court martial, Captain!

LEHDENBURG: Your pardon, Major, I am speaking entirely out of consideration for my fellow officers. [*Blows his nose.*] Devil take it! It is surely no pleasure to sit in this barn of a place as a representative of divine justice. The last time — you remember, Major! The case of the assistant paymaster and the mad little barmaid? That at least was interesting! But today — ?

SECOND COUNCILLOR [*from the table*]: 'Tis not yet evening, Count!

LEHDENBURG: Bless my soul — Really! The esteemed Councillor has re-discovered his

speech! [*Goes to him and taps him on the stomach.*]

PASCHKE [*cuts the conversation impatiently*]: I think we had better proceed! [*Gives a sign to recorder.*]

RECORDER [*goes to the door and calls out*]: The proceedings will be continued. [*Returns to his place.*]

[*Enter Helbig, von Hoeven, and orderly.*]

PASCHKE: Well, Sergeant Helbig, do you feel strong enough to proceed with your case?

HELBIG: At your service, Major.

MAJOR: I'm glad to hear it! — But — orderly! Kindly place a glass of water at the disposal of the defendant.

ORDERLY: There's no glass for the defendant, Major.

PASCHKE: Then take one of these [*points to glasses on the judges' table*].

ORDERLY: Those are for the honorable judges, Major.

PASCHKE: Good heavens! What's the difference?

ORDERLY: Your pardon, Major! My instructions read: On the Councillors' table a decanter with water and five glasses —

LEHDENBURG [*enraged*]: You're a — [*ironically polite*]: de-cidedly diligent and painstaking official!

MAJOR [*sternly*]: Orderly! I command you to place a glass of water at the disposal of the defendant.

ORDERLY: At your service, Major. [*Does so.*]

PASCHKE [*after all have taken their places*]: We will now proceed with the case. [*To the First Councillor*]: Councillor, if you please!

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*after audibly clearing his throat*]: Defendant, do you still persist in your statement given previously to the recess?

HELBIG [*he looks pale and worried*]: Yes, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Then you insist that on the aforesaid evening you were in an excited condition mentally, but not under the influence of liquor?

HELBIG: No, sir! I had taken a few glasses of beer, but I well knew what I was doing.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Then you became a little boisterous in the corridor — Lieutenant von Lauffen reprimanded you — you retorted and finally in a fit of passion you attacked your superior officer?

HELBIG: Yes, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: And otherwise you have nothing to add to your statements?

HELBIG: No, sir!

PASCHKE [*with a polite gesture to First Coun-*

cillor]: Helbig, I will endeavor to point out to you once again, that you will only injure your own case through your stubborn reticence. Helbig, you must conceal nothing from your judges. Perhaps you can tell us some little circumstance that will prove in your favor — Helbig, there's still time — !

HELBIG [*is silent*].

VON HOEVEN [*softly*]: Man! Helbig! Don't be so obstinate! You are killing your own chances!

MAJOR: Then you have nothing to add to your testimony?

HELBIG [*apparently stirred — but after a short pause*]: No, sir!

MAJOR [*shrugs his shoulders and sits down*].

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Then we will proceed with the other witnesses. [*To orderly*]: Orderly! Kindly ask Lieutenant von Lauffen to appear?

ORDERLY [*very officiously looks over his list through his glasses, opens the door and calls*]: Lieutenant von Lauffen! If you please, sir!

VON LAUFFEN [*enters in full dress uniform and comes to attention*].

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Witness, you are Lieutenant Joachim Kurt von Lauffen, of the Magdeburg Uhlan regiment No. 25, born

January 7th, in Strassburg, Alsace, in the year 1881?

VON LAUFFEN [*depressed*]: Yes, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: You are not related to the defendant in any way?

VON LAUFFEN: No, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Will you now kindly relate to us the particulars of your encounter with the defendant on the night of August 12th of the present year?

VON LAUFFEN [*hastily*]: At your service, Councillor. I was about to retire when I heard some one knock at my door. I opened — and there stood — Sergeant Helbig. I asked him what he wanted at that late hour. He answered with all sorts of disjointed statements. Not wishing to create a scene in the corridor, I finally asked him into my rooms. Then I questioned him severely — he retorted angrily — finally permitted himself to be carried away — ! I called the Corporal of the Guard and had him placed under arrest!

COUNCILLOR: Thank you, Lieutenant! Only — it would be highly desirable if you stated the matter a little more explicitly. For instance, what were the specific retorts of the defendant when you reprimanded him?

VON LAUFFEN: That — that I cannot re-

member exactly! All sorts of confused remarks . . . if I recall aright! At any rate, of no material importance, I assure you! Fact, upon my word! Otherwise, no doubt I would have fully remembered them.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: But the defendant seemed to be in a state of excitement?

VON LAUFFEN: Yes — perhaps so.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Or perhaps under the influence of liquor?

VON LAUFFEN: That is possible, though I wouldn't say he was drunk. Only he seemed exceptionally agitated — excited. Almost feverishly so. His whole manner and attack impressed me more like sudden madness. Yes, yes! A case of sudden, temporary insanity. And perhaps — I — I am — I consider it my duty to make this statement — perhaps I really bear part of the blame. I was in a particularly irritable mood on that evening, and reprimanded him somewhat severely, I dare say — rudely, perhaps — and I might say without special reason I frankly admit that! And I must have given him a certain provocation — and I have since bitterly reproached myself for drawing my saber. But as I said I was irritated, tremendously irritated that evening — as sometimes is the case. At any rate, I would, with your

kind permission, if possible, respectfully recommend the defendant to the leniency of the court. [*He is silent as he notices the judges look at each other blandly.*] Yes, yes — I urgently ask — respectfully, with your permission — [*long pause*].

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Hm — ! And further explanation you cannot give us?

VON LAUFFEN: No, sir! [*Long pause.*]

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Then I presume we may as well swear the witness.

VON LAUFFEN [*is visibly startled*].

VON HOEVEN [*with a bow toward the Major, asking for permission*]: I am compelled to respectfully draw the attention of the court to the fact that the statements of witness leave a serious discrepancy at the same point where defendant Helbig claims to have lost his memory. This, to my mind, is a most peculiar coincidence and I consider it my duty to insist upon further investigation as counsel for the defendant. Therefore I respectfully ask the gentlemen of this tribunal to again interrogate witness on that point, if it please the court!

PASCHKE: As you desire, Lieutenant von Hoeven. Lieutenant von Lauffen, I, too, desire to direct to you a few words before you are sworn. I would remind you that, according to the Articles of War, it is your

duty to conceal nothing from us, as you undoubtedly know. Therefore I ask you, as president of this tribunal, and I pray you as your fellow officer and comrade in arms, to reconsider your statements carefully, before you repeat them under oath.

VON LAUFFEN [*hollowly*]: At your service, Major.

PASCHKE [*pause*]: Then you have nothing further to add?

VON LAUFFEN [*is silent. Long and depressing pause*].

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Then let us proceed to swear the witness. [*Rises and reaches for his helmet. The others do the same.*]

COUNT VON LEHDENBURG [*with clear trumpet tones*]: With your permission, Major! Would it not be advisable to give the witness a little more time for the reconsideration of his testimony — and meanwhile obtain deposition of the other witnesses?

PASCHKE [*to First Councillor*]: I don't know if that is permissible under the statutes.

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*after a short deliberation*]: I think it is, Major, unless the gentlemen of the defense or prosecution would object! What say you, gentlemen?

VON HOEVEN: No objections!

THIRD COUNCILLOR: No objections!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Lieutenant von Lauffen,

you are excused for the time being. You will presently be required to repeat your statements under oath, and if possible to amend the same.

VON LAUFFEN [*hoarsely*]: With your permission may I not retire?

PASCHKE: At your pleasure, Lieutenant!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: I would kindly ask you to remain. [*To the Major*]: It may be necessary to have his assistance in the hearing of the other witnesses.

VON LAUFFEN: At your service, sir! [*Retires to the left of the room.*]

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*to the orderly*]: Private Michalek.

ORDERLY [*as above, calls out of the door*]: Private Michalek!

MICHALEK [*enters*].

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Witness, you are Wladislav Woczek Michalek, by profession domestic servant, now private in the third squadron of the Magdeburger Uhlan regiment No. 25? [*Orderly keeps shoving Michalek forward, who remains frantically at strict attention.*]

MICHALEK: Serrviss, Majjorr!

PASCHKE [*mildly instructing him*]: Michalek! You should say: "At your service, Councillor!"

MICHALEK: Serrrvisss, Majjorr!

PASCHKE: No, no! Now, then, say: "A-T Y-O-U-R S-E-R-V-I-C-E, C-O-U-N-C-I-L-L-O-R!

MICHALEK: Serrrvisss, Ma — Ma — Cou-Cou-Coun — [*it is too much for him*].

MAJOR [*discouraged*]. I suppose it's useless!

LEHDENBURG [*in the same dialect as Michalek*]: Ollright, Vladislav! Say serrviss, Majjorr!

MICHALEK [*with a sigh of relief*]: Serrviss, Majjorr!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Private Michalek, are you in any way, manner or form related to the defendant, Sergeant Helbig?

MICHALEK: Serrviss, Majjorr! [*The judges look at each other in surprise.*]

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*to his associates*]: That seems improbable! Helbig was born in Halberstadt; his name on his mother's side was also distinctly German. [*To Michalek*]: So you are really related to Sergeant Helbig?

MICHALEK: Serrviss, Majjorr!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Very good, Now tell us in what way!

MICHALEK [*is silent*].

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Good heavens, man! You surely must be able to tell us how you are related to the defendant?

MICHALEK: Serrviss, Majjorr!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Well then, speak out!

MICHALEK [*is silent and almost faints for fear*].

LEHDENBURG: Well, well, Michalek?

FIRST COUNCILLOR: I'm afraid we shall have to resort to an interpreter.

PASCHKE [*helplessly shrugs his shoulders*].

LEHDENBURG: With your kind permission, Major, may I take the good fellow in hand?

PASCHKE: Why certainly, Captain! Of course!

LEHDENBURG: Moj may Wadek, nie boj sie! — Isse Sergeant Helbig uncle yourrs orr cousin? Siostrzeniec?

MICHALEK [*jovially*]: No, Captain!

LEHDENBURG: Orr maybe Wladislav have Schwester! Maybe Schwester yourrs marry man named Helbig?

MICHALEK: Hav I no Schwester! Nur funf brooders!

LEHDENBURG [*aside*]: Yes! That is just the perplexing difficulty! [*To him*]: Iss diss man pan Sergeant at all — Wogole-Wogole — belong to yourr family?

MICHALEK: Iss my family not so pro — pro — promin — nnnent!

LEHDENBURG [*to the others*]: There you are, gentlemen!

PASCHKE: This good fellow seems to be a trifle weak-minded. However, what was he to testify?

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Lieutenant von Lauffen had him call the Corporal of the Guard. He did not enter the room, nor has he otherwise heard or seen anything.

PASCHKE: I imagine we can dispense with this witness altogether?

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Without a doubt. The prosecution?

THIRD COUNCILLOR: No objections.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: And the gentleman for the defense?

VON HOEVEN: No objections, Councillor.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Private Michalek, you may retire.

MICHALEK: Serrviss, Majjorr! [*Remains standing at attention.*]

LEHDENBURG: Nich bedsie pochwalony Jessuss Christus, Wadek! !

MICHALEK: Na wieki wiekow. Amen! [*Comes about face quickly, and throws a kiss toward the Captain, while he marches off through the door: all laugh.*]

PASCHKE: You certainly have made a conquest there, Count!

LEHDENBURG: Yass, thank you! His excellency, Prince von Bulow, is certainly under obligations to me. An example of practical Colonial statesmanship without the aid of government funds. The great problem is solved.

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*to orderly*]: Sergeant Major Volkhardt!

ORDERLY [*as above calls out of the door*]: Sergeant Major Volkhardt!

VOLKHARDT [*enters and comes to attention*].

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Sergeant Major Volkhardt!

VOLKHARDT [*steps forward and confronts him*]: Here!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Witness, you are Sergeant Major Fredric William Volkhardt, born April 20th, 1850, at Magdeburg?

VOLKHARDT: At your service, Councillor.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Are you in any way, form or manner, through marriage or otherwise, related to the defendant?

VOLKHARDT: No Councillor, not exactly! But Helbig has lived in my house since his twelfth year, after his father, an old comrade of mine, had died.

PASCHKE: Your pardon, Councillor — ! Sergeant Major, pray stand at ease. Kindly forget for the time being that you are in the presence of superiors, since we are, first of all, judges and you are a witness.

VOLKHARDT [*stands at ease*]: At your service, Major!

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*continues*]: But a formal adoption has not taken place?

VOLKHARDT: No, Councillor!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: And you have no valid reasons to withhold your testimony?

VOLKHARDT: No, Councillor.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: On the evening of August 12th, during the welcome festivities in honor of the defendant, you sat side by side with him?

VOLKHARDT: Yes, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Did you on that occasion remark anything peculiar in the manner of your neighbor?

VOLKHARDT: Nothing in particular. He may have been a little quieter than was his custom.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: But he did not appear exceptionally agitated?

VOLKHARDT: No, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Could you tell us if the defendant on that evening drank excessively or perhaps hastily?

VOLKHARDT: I couldn't say that I noticed anything of that sort, though a fellow always drinks a little faster at first.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Approximately, say, how many glasses had he taken, do you think?

VOLKHARDT: Well — it may have been four — or five — ! Six at the most.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Then you would hardly say the defendant was intoxicated?

VOLKHARDT: Well — hardly, Councillor.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Thank you! [*Busies himself with his papers.*]

LEHDENBURG: With your permission — you will pardon me, Major — but I would respectfully request the information whether the defendant had previously partaken of anything substantial or not. For I am firmly convinced that six glasses of beer will produce a result upon an empty stomach dangerously near intoxication. Sorry to say I am speaking from personal experience.

PASCHKE [*impatiently*]: Certainly, Captain, certainly. Councillor, if you please!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Had the defendant eaten anything previously or not?

VOLKHARDT: Nothing at all, sir. I had even quarreled with him on account of it.

LEHDENBURG: *Voila!* Consider the point in question satisfactorily established. Sergeant Helbig, during the commission of his offense, was undoubtedly in a state of irresponsible inebriation.

THIRD COUNCILLOR: Quite possible, Captain! Only — according to the Articles of War — intoxication is not an extenuating circumstance.

LEHDENBURG [*slightly miffed*]: Ah — thank you — thank you, Councillor, for the friendly information. I was fully aware

of it, of course — but consider it an interesting point to bring to the attention of the court.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Sergeant Major Volkhardt, what sort of a man do you consider the defendant? As regards character, I mean?

VOLKHARDT: I know him to be a quiet, honest and straightforward fellow, Councillor.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Then you do not know him as a person of violent tendencies?

VOLKHARDT: No, sir! Not at all, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Well — could you in any way explain to us his sudden violent attack on his superior officer?

VOLKHARDT: No, Councillor. In no way possible.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Or have you any knowledge of, say — a possible hidden motive?

VOLKHARDT: No, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: I mean of any possible ill feeling — or something of the sort — between the Lieutenant and the defendant?

VOLKHARDT: Your pardon, Councillor! A thing of that sort between a commissioned and non-commissioned officer is surely impossible.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Oh certainly — ! Of course! I referred to a possible ill feeling between the two from former days.

VOLKHARDT: No, Councillor! Certainly not!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Or do you think it at all probable that for some secret or personal reasons the defendant is harboring a grudge against Lieutenant von Lauffen?

VOLKHARDT [*slightly startled*]: For personal reasons?

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Well, Sergeant Major — you hesitate! Speak openly, Volkhardt.

VOLKHARDT: At your service, Councillor! I really know of nothing!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: But why did you hesitate?

VOLKHARDT: At your service, Councillor! I — I am almost beside myself over this affair and hardly know what I am doing. To begin with, here is Helbig, whom I consider as my own son, gets into this scrape and I can't for the life of me think what drove him to it — and then, as the Councillor spoke of personal reasons, that might be at the bottom of it all, I couldn't help thinking of — ! But then that surely doesn't belong here, Councillor!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Speak right out, Volkhardt! You can't tell what important bearing your revelations may have on this case.

VOLKHARDT: Your pardon, Councillor! What I meant — hardly —!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Nevertheless, Sergeant Major! It may — it may — !

VOLKHARDT: Well then — ! It just occurred to me that my daughter at home showed a singular interest in the proceedings here. Every few moments she would ask about this and that — and what time the trial commenced — if she couldn't be present — and if the witnesses were compelled to testify under oath, and a lot of nonsense like that, till I finally forbade her to speak of it! Then she grew more excited than ever and insisted that she would have to be present — yes, she insisted determinedly — and — and —well, that just occurred to me — !

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Very good. And had your daughter any particular reason for her agitation, do you think?

VOLKHARDT: Well — yes! In a way! She was, you might say, at one time engaged to marry Sergeant Helbig.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: I see. In that case your daughter's agitation would seem quite natural. At any rate it is most improbable that your daughter had any connection with the affair between Lieutenant von Lauffen and Sergeant Helbig?

VOLKHARDT [*with certainty*]: No, no! Certainly not! That's quite impossible!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: That is so, is it not, Sergeant Helbig?

HELBIG [*bitterly, with faint irony*]: At your service, Councillor!

VON HOEVEN: I respectfully request that Lieutenant von Lauffen answer the same question.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: If you so desire it, Lieutenant von Hoeven, certainly! Though I can't see any reason therefor.

VOLKHARDT [*has now become attentive and looks searchingly toward Hoeven*].

VON HOEVEN: Nevertheless I respectfully repeat my request.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Very well! Lieutenant von Lauffen, will you kindly oblige us?

VON LAUFFEN [*hastily*]: At your service, sir! It is out of the question — out of the question entirely!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Thank you, Lieutenant von Lauffen! It is exactly as I had expected. It was the anxiety of the girl about her prospective bridegroom.

VOLKHARDT: Your pardon, Councillor, but Helbig is no longer engaged to my daughter.

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*jestingly*]: Ah — I see! A lovers' quarrel! My dear Sergeant Major, you will find that I am right.

VOLKHARDT: At your service, Councillor! I suppose so!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Very good. And should we find it necessary to ask information of your daughter, the young lady can be quickly summoned?

VOLKHARDT: At your service, sir! My quarters are close by.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Thank you! Now we will postpone swearing you, Sergeant Major, till the rest of the witnesses are heard. [*To orderly*]: Sergeant Queiss!

ORDERLY [*as above, calls out of the door*]: Sergeant Queiss!

QUEISS [*enters. Comes to attention*].

ORDERLY [*after Queiss enters, he takes another look out of the door, and with a sign of surprise and a frown, exits*].

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Sergeant Johannes Ludwig Queiss!

QUEISS: Here!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: You were born October 2d, 1870, in Brandenburg on the Havel?

QUEISS: Service, sir.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: You are not related to the defendant in any way?

QUEISS: No, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: On the evening of August 12th you were acting Corporal of the Guard within the barracks of the third squadron?

QUEISS: At your service, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Then kindly tell us how you were called, and what happened!

QUEISS: I was in my quarters when I heard Lieutenant von Lauffen call for the Corporal of the Guard. I went at once to his rooms and reported. On my way I met Private Michalek. He came to call me. I sent him to his quarters.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: For what reason?

QUEISS: Something might be going on not necessary for him to hear.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Very good! Go on!

QUEISS: The door to the Lieutenant's rooms stood wide open. I reported and Lieutenant von Lauffen ordered me to place Sergeant Helbig under arrest for having violently attacked him.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: And of the preceding quarrel or dispute you heard nothing?

QUEISS: No, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: And during the transport to the guardhouse the prisoner said nothing?

QUEISS: No, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: 'Tis well! [*To the judges*] So here we have arrived at the same old point. [*To Volkhardt and Queiss*] Sergeant Major Volkhardt and Sergeant Queiss, I ask you again, do you know of anything aside from the testimony already

given that could possibly cast any light on this whole affair?

BOTH TOGETHER: No, Councillor!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Or have you any conjectures — be they what they may?

VOLKHARDT: No, Councillor.

QUEISS [*is silent*].

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Well — Sergeant Queiss?

QUEISS [*after an impressive pause — frowning*]: When I received the command of the Lieutenant to place Sergeant Helbig under arrest I seemed to hear a noise in the Lieutenant's bedroom — and when I led the prisoner off he turned and cast one last glance at that bedroom door.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Well? And?

QUEISS: Well, I suppose there must have been some one in that room.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: And what or who do you think it could have been?

QUEISS: Hm! What else could it have been but a woman! [*Distinct movement among the judges.*]

LEHDENBURG [*aloud*]: Ah ! ! ! ! ! !

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*to Queiss*]: A woman? You mean, such was your conjecture?

VOLKHARDT [*bursts out into a soft, respectful laugh — in an audible whisper, shaking his head*]: Well — I'll be —

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Sergeant Major Volkhardt, you have something to say?

VOLKHARDT: At your service, Councillor! I would respectfully say that Queiss — he is really our best Sergeant — I don't believe there's a better one in the corps or in the entire army — no better rider at least, and as for his veterinary knowledge, I tell you —

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*impatiently*]: Yes, yes, my dear Volkhardt, that is quite possible.

VOLKHARDT: It's a fact Councillor — begging your pardon — he's a sort of a woman hater. It's something like a red rag to a bull — and whenever there's any trouble — to his way of thinking, there's sure to be a woman at the bottom of it!

LEHDENBURG: I must frankly admit this fellow interests me decidedly.

PASCHKE [*reprimanding*]: Captain, I beg of you — ! 'Tis well, Volkhardt. We shall not accept the suspicions of Sergeant Queiss off hand. However, it is our sworn duty to follow even this most unlikely clue! [*Motions to Councillor to proceed.*]

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*with a rather superior smile*]: Sergeant Queiss! What else did you notice that would point to the presence of a woman in that room?

QUEISS: Nothing, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: And the sounds you

heard may have come from somewhere else, may they not? From the street or from the adjoining room? The barrack walls are not particularly thick!

QUEISS: Well, maybe so! The noise wasn't really what made me suspicious, but it was Helbig's turning back and looking at the door.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Sergeant Queiss, I am forced to bring to your attention that you are here as a witness. You must not advance suppositions or theories for which you can't have the slightest proofs. Why you can't even tell us how or why you came to these suspicions.

QUEISS: Well — I've seen a woman come from the Lieutenant's rooms before.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: You have? And when was that?

QUEISS: At the beginning of July, about two o'clock in the morning. I can tell the exact date if I look in the revision book. It was when Andromeda had her left shoulder kicked to pieces.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Do you know who this woman was?

QUEISS: No, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: But you said you saw the lady?

QUEISS: Yes, sir! It was a sort of a white

figure gliding down the corridor — around the corner — and she was gone.

LEHDENBURG: Unquestionably the white lady of the Berlin Castle on nocturnal detour.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: But, Sergeant Queiss! That a full-grown person could as suddenly disappear as you describe, does not sound very plausible. And as for having been a ghost —

QUEISS: I don't believe in such rot, Councillor.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: And the barracks are securely locked and barred during the night?

QUEISS: Yes, sir! At least they are supposed to be.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Then it is evidently impossible for any one to suddenly disappear [*sarcastically*]. This "white lady" came from the Lieutenant's rooms, you say?

QUEISS: Yes, sir! That I saw clearly — as clearly as I can see the Councillor now!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: But why didn't you follow her?

QUEISS: Just at that moment I heard two horses biting each other in the stables, and as the stable guard must have fallen asleep I ran down there.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: And you considered that of more importance?

QUEISS [*emphatically*]: Yes, sir!

LEHDENBURG: A most interesting individual, 'pon my word.

QUEISS: When I returned I searched every nook and corner —

FIRST COUNCILLOR: And found?

QUEISS: Nothing, sir!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: And then you realized that you had made a mistake. You permitted the moonshine to deceive you.

QUEISS: The moon didn't shine that night, sir.

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*annoyed*]: Or heaven knows what you dreamed of that night. At any rate you surely do not wish to maintain that the occurrence had any connection with Sergeant Helbig's case? He was still at the riding academy at that time.

QUEISS: I know that, Councillor.

LEHDENBURG: I beg your pardon. I would respectfully ask a question. I would like to ascertain if there is any specimen of lovely femininity dwelling within the range of these barracks.

QUEISS [*startled, but silent, casts a furtive glance at Volkhardt*].

VOLKHARDT: At your service, Captain. My quarters are in the barracks and — of course — my daughter lives with me.

LEHDENBURG [*slowly*]: Indeed! Thank you — thank you kindly, Sergeant Major! I merely wanted to know. . . .

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Sergeant Queiss! You are fully convinced now, are you not, that you were deceived in some way or other?

QUEISS [*shrugs his shoulders*]: Well — it's always the case. Whenever an honest fellow gets into trouble there's a woman at the bottom of it all.

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*reproving*]: That's nonsense, Queiss.

LEHDENBURG: A pronounced woman hater, 'pon my word.

PASCHKE: Yes, indeed! It appears to be a sort of a fixed idea of the man — and yet — ! Helbig! Tell me! Was there a woman at the bottom of this affair?

HELBIG [*agitated*]: No! No! No!

PASCHKE [*warning*]: Helbig!

HELBIG [*distressed*]: I'll not say another word. [*Sinks down exhausted. Pause.*]

PASCHKE: Lieutenant von Lauffen, will you kindly express yourself on the point in question?

VON LAUFFEN [*is startled. He battles with himself — after a painful pause*]: Sergeant Queiss is certainly mistaken.

PASCHKE: Hm — ! Lieutenant von Lauffen! For the second time I will refrain from

pointing out to you the seriousness of the oath you will be obliged to take upon your testimony. The statements of Sergeant Queiss have taken us somewhat by surprise, but if there is only a grain of truth in his surmises and suspicions, it would readily explain some of the previously inexplicable points in the case. Lieutenant von Lauffen, a few moments ago you asked for the defendant the leniency of this court and pointed to extenuating circumstances. Therefore — a rivalry — a sudden jealous rage — or something of that sort would undoubtedly establish such a circumstance — even though it failed to clear the defendant of his crime altogether. Can you or will you assist the defendant to this advantage? [*Portentous pause.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*distressed*]: I — I — I have nothing further to add to my statements.

PASCHKE [*shrugs his shoulders and sits down. Long pause.*]

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*mildly warning*]: You will presently be compelled to repeat your statements under oath, Lieutenant von Lauffen.

VON LAUFFEN [*dully*]: At your service, Councillor.

[*Long and pregnant pause, the while First Councillor toys nervously with paper cutter.*]

VON HOEVEN [*hoarsely — clearing his throat*]: I would respectfully maintain that in spite of all the testimony to date the case is not at all cleared up. However, I consider the statements of both Sergeant Queiss and Sergeant Major Volkhardt of grave importance. Therefore I respectfully request the court to summon the daughter of Sergeant Major Volkhardt, and obtain deposition of the young lady — in fact learn from her own lips what she knows about the case, if anything at all.

[*Perplexed silence. Volkhardt visibly startled.*]

LEHDENBURG [*emphatically*]: I am certainly in favor of conceding the point to the defense.

HAGEMEISTER [*alert*]: I fully agree with the Captain.

PASCHKE: Well — so do I.

[*Second and Third Councillors nod their consent.*]

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Certainly, gentlemen! Shall the young lady be summoned at once?

PASCHKE: I think so. The quarters of the third squadron are scarcely five hundred paces distant. Orderly! But where is the Sergeant?

QUEISS [*goes to door and calls*]: Sergeant!

ORDERLY [*enters — while obviously barring some one from entering the room*].

PASCHKE: Where have you been, Sergeant?

ORDERLY: Outside, sir!

PASCHKE [*sarcastically*]: So I observed! Send the usher of the court at once to the barracks of the third squadron and kindly have Miss Volkhardt served with this summons [*takes paper from orderly*]. Ask her to kindly answer the same at once if possible. [*Motions impatiently to orderly, to take the summons.*]

ORDERLY [*remains calmly at the door — grudgingly*]: At your service, Major! Miss Volkhardt is already here. [*General astonishment.*]

ORDERLY [*deigns to continue*]: She has been waiting quite some time. Ever since — [*laboriously puts glasses on nose and studies his list*] — since — Sergeant Queiss was called. She desires to testify.

PASCHKE: But why haven't you reported that before?

ORDERLY: Because her name is not given on the official list as witness, and according to instructions women are not admitted here.

PASCHKE: Is that so? Then you may admit her now!

ORDERLY: At your service, Major. [*Calls out of the door*] Miss Volkhardt! [*Exits.*]

LEHDENBURG [*in a loud aside*]: Ah — here is where the story begins!

CLARA [*enters, in a plain, dark dress and a simple straw hat*].

PASCHKE: You are Miss Clara Volkhardt?

VOLKHARDT [*beside himself*]: Your pardon, Major! Yes — this is my daughter.

PASCHKE: Thank you, Sergeant Major! [*To Clara*]: You desire to testify in the case of Sergeant Helbig, Miss Volkhardt?

CLARA [*oppressed — yet decided*]: Yes!

PASCHKE: You have something to tell us? Something of great importance, perhaps?

CLARA: Yes! — Only — ! You will pardon the question. Have the witnesses been sworn as yet?

PASCHKE: No, not yet.

CLARA [*pressing*]: Not any one of them?

PASCHKE: No, Miss Volkhardt!

CLARA [*relieved*]: Thank you, Major.

PASCHKE: First of all, Miss Volkhardt, you must try and control yourself — and then — you may be seated.

CLARA: Thank you, Major! I prefer to stand.

PASCHKE: As you like. Councillor, if you please.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: At your service, Major. [*Affably*] Hm — now then, Miss Volkhardt, will you kindly tell us first of all what you know? Your deposition can be taken later, for it is just possible that your information is entirely irrelevant, of course!

CLARA [*nervously*]: I hardly think so!

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Well — that we shall soon be able to decide. You are fully acquainted with the history of this action, I presume?

CLARA: Yes! Perfectly!

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*praising*]: Very good. And — what do you know in connection with the same?

CLARA [*with quick resolve*]: I know how Lieutenant von Lauffen and Sergeant Helbig came to quarrel.

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Indeed? That information would be highly desirable to us! So if you please, Miss Volkhardt.

CLARA: As you know my foster brother has been away at the riding academy for the past two years —

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Yes, yes — !

CLARA: — and before he left — we were partly engaged. Not formally, or openly, but in a way that he considered me his intended bride —

FIRST COUNCILLOR: Correct!

PASCHKE [*lays his hand on First Councillor's arm — he should cease the interruptions*].

CLARA: And when he returned he — he imagined to have cause for jealousy of the Lieutenant. That same night he called Lieutenant von Lauffen to account. The

Lieutenant refused to listen, and ordered him from his room. But Helbig grew insistent and finally accused the Lieutenant of having me concealed in his bedroom. As the Lieutenant would not permit him to approach the door, Helbig threw himself upon the Lieutenant and flung him aside. Then the Lieutenant struck Helbig with his saber — but in spite of it Helbig reached the door and opened it — [*general movement*].

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*embarrassed*]: Well — that — that all seems very plausible, but, Miss Volkhardt — if you will permit me — how do you know all these details so perfectly? Were you — ?

CLARA [*hard*]: Yes — ! I was in there — !

VOLKHARDT [*has watched the proceedings since Clara's entrance in a sort of a daze — now totters back. Queiss busies himself about him.*]

CLARA [*softly*]: I had gone to Lieutenant von Lauffen's room. We — I love him. [*Pause.*]

FIRST COUNCILLOR [*rattled*]: Yes — that's all very good — but am I to understand — ?

PASCHKE: I think that makes the case perfectly clear, Councillor. All that is necessary now is to obtain the corroboration of both the defendant and Lieutenant von Lauffen. Sergeant Helbig, do you admit the truth of Miss Volkhardt's statements?

HELBIG [*bitterly*]: I presume it must be so, if she says it. [*Sinks into chair and buries his face in his hands.*]

PASCHKE: And you — Lieutenant von Lauffen?

VON LAUFFEN: At your service, Major!

VOLKHARDT [*up to this moment has doubted it all — until the answer of Lauffen upon whose lips his eyes are fixed. At this moment he utters a hoarse cry and would pounce on him, half drawing his saber*]: Ah — !

PASCHKE [*calls warningly*]: Sergeant Major! [*General tumult.*]

QUEISS [*at the same moment seizes Volkhardt from behind and with giant strength forces him into one of the witness chairs, whispering in his ear sullenly*]: Keep cool, Sergeant Major! One is enough! Keep cool!

VOLKHARDT [*sits gasping in chair. Every one has risen and looks at him in great excitement — at him and Queiss. The Second Councillor alone has remained seated.*]

PASCHKE [*severely*]: What does this mean, Sergeant Major? What does it mean?

QUEISS [*resolutely*]: Your pardon, Major! I thought the Sergeant Major fainting and so I kept him from falling.

PASCHKE: Was that really the case?

[*The others look at each other in silence and shrug their shoulders.*]

LEHDENBURG [*animated now comes to the rescue — between the two Sergeants and the Major*]: With your permission, I would respectfully say: Without a doubt — without a doubt! Observed the incident in every detail personally, Major. A genuine swoon — unquestionable, I assure you. Fact! Upon my word! And I should say no wonder! [*Puts on monocle, turns to Queiss, eyes him, and then taps him on the shoulder*]: You came to the rescue in good time. Well done, my good fellow, well done! [*To Volkhardt*]: Come, come, my good Sergeant Major! An old veteran like you must not give up so easily. Come, cheer up! Everything will be all right again!

VOLKHARDT [*straightens up — with deep meaning*]: At your service, Captain! It must be all right again. It must!

[CURTAIN]

ACT IV

[*The scene is the same as in Act II.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*is lying on the divan, his head resting on his hands. On table and chairs are scattered in confusion czapka, bandolier, saber and gloves. The room is in semi-darkness. After a little while he rises slowly, languidly goes to door and calls*]: Michalek! [*Closes door, comes to desk and remains standing.*]

MICHALEK [*enters*]: Pan Lieutenant?

VON LAUFFEN: You can light the lamp, Michalek.

MICHALEK: Serviss, pan Lieutenant. [*He lights the lamp.*]

VON LAUFFEN: And put the room in order.

MICHALEK: Serviss! [*Puts the different articles in their proper places while von Lauffen watches him absent-mindedly. With the last article in his hand*]: Will pan Lieutenant have coffee or tea? [*As Lauffen is silent*] Isse make vera quick. Michalek buy fresh alcohol. Isse make vera quick.

VON LAUFFEN: Never mind, Michalek. I don't want it.

MICHALEK [*timidly — after a pause*]: Orr pan Lieutenant preferr stein beer from Stadt Strassburg? Isse fine fresh beer —

VON LAUFFEN [*sharply*]: Shut up — ! No, no — [*swallowing the last words — repentantly*] No, Michalek, I don't want any. You're a good fellow. [*Takes a handful of cigarettes from the case and gives them to him.*] Here!

MICHALEK [*would kiss his hand — beaming with gratitude*]: Danke, pan Lieutenant!

VON LAUFFEN: Nonsense! Kusch!

MICHALEK [*goes to door*]: Pan Lieutenant wish something else?

VON LAUFFEN: No! Nothing more. [*Pulls his watch.*] Tell me, Michalek, what time is it? [*Tapping his watch on his hand and holding it to his ear — partly to himself.*] My timepiece seems to be on a strike.

MICHALEK: Isse quarter to ten. Headquarters make preparation to sound Taps.

VON LAUFFEN [*startled*]: Good! When you have finished cleaning up you can go to bed.

MICHALEK: Serrviss, pan Lieutenant. [*Would go to door.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*calls after him*]: Michalek! But first go to Lieutenant von Hoeven and ask him to step over here for a moment — for a few words.

MICHALEK: Serrviss! [*Repeats order*] Would Lieutenant von Hoeven please come see pan Lieutenant for few words — for few words.

VON LAUFFEN: Correct! Kusch!

MICHALEK [*exits*].

VON LAUFFEN [*restlessly walks up and down the room. Finally goes to mirror and arranges his uniform a bit. Buttons his collar and fixes his hair with two military brushes*].

VON HOEVEN [*enters a trifle embarrassed*].

VON LAUFFEN [*meets him half way*]: You'll pardon me for sending for you. [*He stops — then, jerkingly*] I had to have some one to talk to. I couldn't bear it any longer.

VON HOEVEN: Yes — I understand. However — I meant to come of my own accord.

VON LAUFFEN: You did? Really? [*Goes to him and presses his hand.*] Thank you, old man!

VON HOEVEN [*has gripped his hand tightly*]: Yes, I surely would have come — ! Only — I needed a little time to regain control of myself. Immediately after the proceedings — no, no! I could not have done it. — And — [*he is gradually talking himself into a rage*] and that — was a good thing for you, for I could have whipped you — whipped you like a cur —

VON LAUFFEN [*is visibly stung — nervously bites his lips*].

VON HOEVEN [*several times up and down — after a pause*]: Man — what have you done? — to yourself — to me — to all of us who wear the army shoulder straps! Heavens above — ! [*Takes a deep breath — then quieter*] My boy, I loved you like my own brother — who died in my arms when he was scarcely sixteen. Now don't for a moment imagine I considered you the spotless example of masculine perfection. Far from it! I was never blind to your many faults and weaknesses, but I loved you in spite of them, for you had the material within you for a man — But now — ! Now!! Had you brought ruin to any other girl — well, I might have overlooked and added it to your other faults and shortcomings. [*Laughs bitterly.*] Oh, yes! So illogical we men are! But that through you those fellows out there can resume their scurrilous attacks on our calling, that you yourself have given these insidious knaves a valid reason for their foul slurs! That through you they have been given the full right to ask the question: How can the officer demand the respect of his subordinates when he himself refuses to recognize their holiest feelings and their simplest

sense of honor? That — By God, boy, I cannot forgive you. But not that alone. I myself had warned you on the self-same accursed evening. I sensed the catastrophe! I saw it coming. But, no! You blundered into the trap like a schoolboy — and as the whole disgraceful affair disclosed itself at the court martial, I could have treated you like a schoolboy — like a schoolboy . . . !

[*Long pause. Von Hoeven walks agitated up and down. Von Lauffen has stepped to the window.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*after a pause — with forced calmness*]: How a man can change! If any one had insinuated four weeks ago that I would ever allow this to be said to my face — I would have — [*short and discordant laugh*] Well, Hoeven, I presume you know what you are saying.

VON HOEVEN [*honestly*]: Yes! And that's why I have said it.

VON LAUFFEN: So that's settled. The damage is irreparable. No use to discuss it further. The more important question is: What now?

VON HOEVEN [*shrugs his shoulders and toys with paper cutter*].

VON LAUFFEN [*slowly*]: Hoeven! Do you know, I don't feel at all grateful to you for

having saved me several times during the proceedings — from — perjury?

VON HOEVEN: Man — have you gone stark mad?

VON LAUFFEN [*quietly*]: Not at all. I will tell you why. Had I taken the false oath, then my course now would be perfectly simple and easy — ! [*Jumps up in his excitement.*] You cannot possibly imagine my present state of mind. All the hopelessness and distraction — ! It's enough to drive me mad.

VON HOEVEN: Lauffen! Do you know that the penalty for perjury is — the penitentiary?

VON LAUFFEN: Certainly! I had fully informed myself on that point. And even so — I was compelled to see it through to the end, wasn't I?

VON HOEVEN [*shrugs his shoulders, embarrassed*].

VON LAUFFEN: You admit that! And this much I will confess to you. Worse than the impending penitentiary was to me the sight of this fellow Helbig. After treating him with contempt as one of the rabble, I am forced to hide from him. I am forced to lie — devil take it, lie for my own personal advantage — while he lies heroically — voluntarily — fully knowing that it must be his ruin — ! That was worse than

perjury — a thousand times worse than the penitentiary. By God! But what's the use! I had to swallow my medicine and I did it. The incident was closed. And now you come here, and —

VON HOEVEN: And by the eternal man! What about Clara Volkhardt?

VON LAUFFEN [*stubbornly*]: The incident was closed — and my path, devil knows, was straight before me. And yet I sit here and fret and worry. I am worse off than before. On my hands and knees I would search for a loophole to escape — to escape it all. [*Throws himself on the divan.*] What in the world am I going to do now?

VON HOEVEN [*hesitating*]: I'm afraid you will have to ask for your discharge.

VON LAUFFEN: Yes! And the sooner the better, unless I wish to receive it. So far, so good. But after all, I am not the only sufferer.

VON HOEVEN [*looks at him embarrassed*].

VON LAUFFEN: Confound it! I must come to some sort of an understanding with the Sergeant Major and — Clara!

VON HOEVEN: Frankly speaking, advice under the circumstances is a difficult matter. . . . You will hardly be able to clear your skirts of the affair altogether. [*With a sudden resolve*] Why don't you marry the girl?

VON LAUFFEN [*slowly and thoughtfully*]: Marry? Yes! I've thought of it myself. — That would perhaps [*rises, more animated*]— Look here, Hoeven! If only to correct your opinion of me somewhat [*warmly*] — I want you to believe me! The affair with Clara was not a frivolous intrigue. In the beginning, perhaps — but later! — With every day my affection for the girl grew stronger — honestly! Yes! —In fact my regard for her was too great — and now I love her more than ever. She comes forward, of her own free will casts aside all timidity. Like a faithful comrade she cuts me out — she comes to my rescue. That was grand, Hoeven; that was noble — that was unparalleled. Upon my word, I would gladly marry the girl —

VON HOEVEN: That would be properly taking the consequences, my boy.

VON LAUFFEN [*shows the smallness of his soul*]: But I am not the kind of a man to take the consequences. — Ye gods, what sort of a face my father would make to that!

VON HOEVEN: It strikes me the old gentleman will make a face as it is!

VON LAUFFEN: Yes, I suppose so! And after all why should I consider the old man and the whole collection of cousins and aunts?

I'll manage them all some way! But see here! Clara — Lord knows I love the girl, and her honest old father! The old veteran has something about him to be almost venerated.

VON HOEVEN [*laughs lightly*].

VON LAUFFEN: Fact, upon my word. I almost reverence the old fellow. However, if those were the only obstacles! No! I tell you I simply could not endure the sudden appearance of an uncle or brother-in-law who would disclose himself a chimney sweep and proffer me his soiled but honest hand of toil. No, no, no! That I could not bear!

VON HOEVEN [*after a long pause — particularly frosty*]: Well, then the incident is closed. Yes, and as that was the only way to correctly and honorably right the wrong you have committed you will have to do the best you can now and await developments. And — at least for the present it would be senseless to discuss the matter further. Don't you think so? Well — good night, Lauffen! Should you require my services you know where. [*Goes to door*] Good night. [*Exits, after ignoring Lauffen's extended hand.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*looks after him surprised and dumbfounded, takes a few steps as if to follow him, but does not do so. With a hopeless*

gesture he drops into chair. There is a knock at the door. He does not hear it the first time. At the second knock he jumps up startled.] Well? What is it?

MICHALEK [*enters. He is still buttoning his blouse*]: Isse de pan Sergeant Major!

VON LAUFFEN [*with a start*]: Who?

MICHALEK: Pan Sergeant Major respectfully ask —

VON LAUFFEN [*after a moment's thought*]: Let him come in!

MICHALEK: Serrviss! [*Steps back and opens door for Volkhardt, who enters; after which Michalek exits.*]

VOLKHARDT [*comes at once to attention. He is without saber or belt, and carries his cap in his hand. He still wears the ulanka with the order of the iron cross, which he wore during court-martial scene. This is the evening of the same day. Long silence*].

VON LAUFFEN [*hoarsely, depressed*]: You wished to speak to me, Sergeant Major?

VOLKHARDT [*heavily*]: At your service, Lieutenant. I have been waiting over yonder — in the dark — till I saw a light here — then I thought, now is the time; now you can go over — and — here I am!

VON LAUFFEN: Yes, Sergeant Major! I — believe we have something to say to each other.

VOLKHARDT: At your service, Lieutenant! We have!

VON LAUFFEN: M — yes — of course — Sergeant Major [*with sudden resolve*] — I have done you a wrong! A wrong that can never again be righted. And — but stand at ease, Sergeant Major! You're not on duty now.

VOLKHARDT [*drops his rigidity slightly and tosses his cap on the desk*].

VON LAUFFEN: Now, then! — and for this I humbly ask your pardon, Sergeant Major. I earnestly beg your forgiveness. 'Pon my word, Sergeant Major, I would give anything in the world if it could be undone.

VOLKHARDT: That is scarcely possible, Lieutenant.

VON LAUFFEN: Unfortunately — yes! And that is the worst, the maddening part of it all. I have done you a wrong, and I cannot make amends. [*Hesitating*] 'Sergeant Major, shall I give you and Clara [*is silent under the fierce glances of the old man*] — My God! I don't know what to do! You wanted to speak to me. Perhaps you know a way.

VOLKHARDT [*hoarsely*]: At your service, Lieutenant! I know a way [*as he pulls a revolver from the breast pocket of his coat*] — here!

VON LAUFFEN [*bursting out*]: Sergeant Major, are you — ! What does this mean?

VOLKHARDT: Your pardon, Lieutenant, but that seems clear enough. This is my service revolver — loaded! You have another — in there. That's regulation. [*Points to desk.*] And I mean, as is custom in such cases —

VON LAUFFEN: Sergeant Major, that is impossible.

VOLKHARDT [*with gradually rising effect*]: I would respectfully remind the Lieutenant that it is surely much more impossible that things shall remain as they are. That I shall be left with the girl on my hands — the people pointing their fingers at us — and that my honorable name is soiled and befouled with impunity! That is — by God — that surely is impossible! [*Shouting*] There must be justice in the world!

VON LAUFFEN: Certainly there must be, Sergeant Major — of course! But you must see for yourself, that there may be cases where even with the best intentions — with the very best intentions, Sergeant Major —

CLARA [*enters, and after a quick, worried glance around, remains standing near the door. Both men look at her in astonishment*].

VOLKHARDT [*speaks first — roughly*]: You — ? What are you doing here?

CLARA [*simply*]: I followed you, father.

VOLKHARDT: What — ? What do you want here? Yes, you! Get out!

CLARA: Since all this is on my account [*determined*] — I demand to be present.

VOLKHARDT: Yes! You're right! Look at her, Lieutenant! Look at her standing there. Doesn't she look like a good and pure girl? Doesn't she look like innocence herself? As if she were still my own dear child, whom I trusted blindly, since I put my boy under the sod out there! And now — I would rather she were lying in the grave beside the boy, instead of her shame and disgrace breaking her father's heart.

CLARA [*imploring but decided*]: Father!

VOLKHARDT [*turns from her without answer, toward Lauffen*]: And now, when I seek the man who is the cause of it all and ask him for satisfaction — [*points to revolver*].

CLARA [*frightened — takes a step forward*].

VON LAUFFEN [*avoiding — yet in commanding tone*]: Sergeant Major, as you see, I've allowed you to speak your mind without interruption because I realize my guilt, and admit that you have a right — that you are justified in your anger. But you ask an impossibility. I cannot fight a non-commissioned officer. I *dare* not!

VOLKHARDT [*stepping back*]: *A non-commis-*

sioned officer? Why, of course! That's what I am [*with a bitter laugh*]! Your pardon, Lieutenant. I had almost forgotten it! When a fellow has been regarded and esteemed in his regiment for years, as a sort of a memento — Old Volkhardt, the veteran of the last war, who took part in the great attack at Vionville, for which he received the iron cross from the Emperor's hands himself — then he is liable to grow presumptuous and forgetful of his real station in life. Your pardon, Lieutenant; I'm on earth again — and I realize I am not of equal rank — and [*pointing to Clara*] — at that rate I suppose she may even consider herself honored — highly honored — for she too belongs to the people of the *second class!*

VON LAUFFEN [*sharply*]: Sergeant Major, I command you to be silent. Your language is well-nigh treasonable. I warn you, you are endangering your head as well as your stripes.

VOLKHARDT [*wildly*]: Well, what of it, Lieutenant von Lauffen? What more can I lose than I have already? Am I not degraded enough? Degraded and full of contempt for myself? [*Laughs madly.*] Old fool that I've been. I imagined myself to be somebody! I have done my duty faith-

fully for thirty-three long years, as if, by God, as if my life depended on it. And when at times the doubt did tempt me, because I couldn't rise above a certain grade, I would say to myself: There, there, old man, be content! Even your inferior station has its honor. *Its honor!* Bah! It was a lie and deception, and I myself am the most deceived of all! [*Stops in his excitement.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*sharply — after trying several times to interrupt him*]: Sergeant Major! Will you now come to your senses?

CLARA [*has thrown herself into a chair, her face hidden in her hands, looking up from time to time in utter helplessness*].

VOLKHARDT [*has not heard von Lauffen — partly to himself*]: And this [*taking hold of the iron cross*] — When I fastened it here this morning, I said to myself: You are the only man in the regiment possessing this. Not even the Colonel — And now! [*Tears it off with trembling hand.*] Away with the bauble! It's nothing more than an ounce or two of old iron, and may just as well rust in the dirt. [*Would throw it down, but hesitates.*] And yet I held it higher than anything else in the world. I wanted it pinned on my breast when once my last Taps had

sounded, and I'm lowered into the ground, six feet under the sod. But now, I don't want to wear it any longer. I dare not wear it any longer. Not a man like me! [*Shoves it on the desk in his rage*] — Not a fellow like me!

VON LAUFFEN: Sergeant Major! I must earnestly request you to control yourself now. All this you are saying is nonsense — sheer nonsense.

VOLKHARDT [*slowly, as he is apparently awakened to von Lauffen's presence*]: A while ago, over there, while waiting in the dark, I was tempted for a moment to end it all. [*Wildly*] But no! Said I: The other one must go too! And if he will not give me my right — [*bursting out*] — then I'll take it! [*Suddenly raises his revolver at von Lauffen.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*looks into his eyes without flinching and doesn't move a muscle*].

CLARA: Father! [*Throws herself in front of him in order to shield Lauffen.*]

VOLKHARDT [*seizes her with his left hand and pulls her to her knees with a mighty grip, still keeping revolver leveled at von Lauffen. He still aims. Suddenly his arm begins to tremble. Slowly and reluctantly he lowers the pistol. Gnashing — half to himself*]: I can't do it — I can't — he's my superior

officer. I can't do it. I'm too cowardly! [*Sobs in his rage.*] I've obeyed — obeyed for thirty-three years and that has sapped the marrow from my bones. Now I can't even avenge myself. I'm a coward — a coward! [*Slowly collects himself — bitterly*] Once the father saved my life. Now the son has taken it from me again. [*Straightens up, much quieter.*] Our accounts are squared!

CLARA [*has half risen, as her father released her*].

VOLKHARDT [*looks at her for quite some time, slowly stoops over her, as if he would kiss her on the brow. Tears rolling down his cheeks*]: My poor, poor child. We two — [*with a sudden jerk he straightens up. Hard and roughly*]: Come! Get up! Let's get out of here. We'll crawl away somewhere — anywhere — into a rat hole, so people can't see us to point their fingers at us and whisper: Do you see her over there? The young one? And the old fellow? Don't look at me like that! Not so quietly — not so calmly. I tell you, don't stand there as you did this morning, when you exposed your disgrace to the whole world, without a single trace of shame.

CLARA [*lowers her head slightly*].

VOLKHARDT [*points to the door*]: And now

let's make an end of it! [*As she hesitates — threateningly*] Go!

CLARA [*hesitating at first, then clearly and resolutely*]: No, father. I shall remain — with him! [*Pointing to Lauffen*] Now, more than ever. You are doing him an injustice. Had I remained strong, we would all be standing here with upraised heads. He, you and I. I bear all the blame — I alone. [*Softly and gently, like a confession*] Because I loved him — I could not help myself — I threw myself in his way!

VOLKHARDT [*tottering — puts his hand to his brow*]: Wha — what are you saying? You — you threw yourself — ? That's the sort of a creature you are? You threw yourself at him — and when he's grown tired of you you'll throw yourself at another one! So that's what you are? [*With a gurgling cry*] Then go to hell! [*With lightning rapidity raises the revolver and fires.*]

VON LAUFFEN [*cries out*]: Sergeant Major! [*Rushes to him and tries to intercept him, but is too late.*]

CLARA [*putting her hands to her bosom — sinks down with breaking voice*]: Father, I thank you! [*Falls heavily to the floor.*]

VOLKHARDT [*watches her fall, horrified. The pistol drops from his hand, and he seems*

slowly to comprehend what he has done. As Lauffen would approach Clara, he motions him back with a gesture]: Now she is mine again! [*He kneels and gently takes her head in his lap.*]

CLARA [*opens her eyes, leaves one hand to her father, while searching with the other for von Lauffen's. Softly*]: Dearest!

VON LAUFFEN [*sobbing, kneels down beside her*].

CLARA [*raises her head a trifle and smiles weakly, then she falls back and dies*].

VOLKHARDT [*slowly and carefully lowers her to the floor, looks at her once more, rises languidly. Then speaks reproachfully, but calmly*]: Now the Lieutenant can call the Corporal of the Guard again.

[CURTAIN]

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